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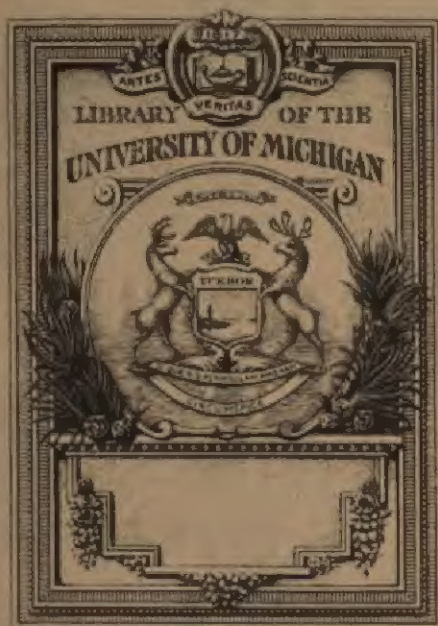
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SHAKESPEAR:
THE MAN AND HIS WORK

SHAKESPEAR

Himself and his Work

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

William
BY
W. CAREW HAZLITT

*Third Edition, entirely Recast with Important Additions,
Two Portraits of Shakespear, and several Facsimiles
And a New Index*

LONDON
BERNARD QUARITCH
1908

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PREFACE

WHEN the present volume originally appeared in 1903, it was not intended to form more than an Essay or a Sketch, almost exclusively limited to new facts or new arguments. The reduction of the matter to type shewed me what I had been able to accomplish, and what I had left undone; and during the last five years it has been one of my favourite employments to develop the original effort into something more nearly resembling a Biography. I had a most imperfect idea, when I started, of the state of information and knowledge on the subject; but, independently of a succession of new lights, for an ignorance of which earlier workers were obviously not responsible, the long familiar incidents of the life of the poet, sparing as they were, have more frequently than not been misrepresented. In other words, the personal history of Shakespear was rendered even less clear than it might have been, and I now attempt to put on a better footing the new treatment of the question, which came from my pen in the first instance.

I have as far as possible refrained from noticing points not immediately affecting Shakespear, which have been already adduced by others.

Every strong mind more or less unconsciously and involuntarily fulfils the mission of enlarging and raising the standard of thought, of becoming the benefactor of the age and community to which it immediately belongs, and so of permanently and universally befriending humanity. There have been those, whose gifts and whose achievements have from century to century impressed and fascinated their contemporaries, and have laid under obligations millions of

after-comers. But the genius of Shakespear was purely intellectual, and it was hampered in his own day by professional subservience to the demands of the stage; and we see, how long it was, before it was fully and accurately recognized. In the eyes of generations of Englishmen, comprising such as stood at his side, he was the gentle Shakespear, the comic writer, the uneducated aspirant to an equality with Jonson, and Beaumont, and Fletcher, the playwright in whose work the *superior* intellects of the Restoration and of the Augustan epoch of Anne saw little more than the occasional source of a plot or a situation for their own dramatic compositions.

After all, the fittest and most eloquent homage of his native country to Shakespear is one, which England is capable of offering single-handed, namely, a text of his writings as pure as it is in our power to produce, accompanied by such biographical and literary illustrations as may be collected from them and from collateral sources. The latter part of the task I have endeavoured to accomplish. The former I think that I must leave to others; it is almost a labour commending itself to a limited company. The text is at present in a more satisfactory state than it was half a century ago; but much has still to be elucidated and rectified. Surely we do not want in this case an addition to our architectural metropolitan abortions by some German stonemason—some latter-day Jannsen.

W. C. H.

BARNES COMMON, SURREY,
April, 1906.

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INTRODUCTION

THE illustration of the life and writings of WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR has constituted the earnest and affectionate study of quite a long succession of eminent scholars and antiquaries, who have exerted their best efforts in supplying lacunæ in the biography, and elucidating the text of the Plays and Poems; and it consequently becomes a matter for surprize that so much remains to be done. It is to the private and literary history of Shakespear, however, rather than to the settlement of debateable textual points, that I propose immediately to address myself. Shakespear stands alone in more than one sense—in his unique literary power and in his singular personal character. Charles Knight remarked of him that he is “a man who stands above all other individual men, above all ranks of men; in comparison with whom, in his permanent influence upon mankind, generations of nobles, fighting men, statesmen, princes, are but as dust;” and Bulwer Lytton in 1836, more particularly referring to Hazlitt, declared that it was the property of genius to invest with interest everything associated with it, making it an honour even to have been the contemporaries of such persons, and an hereditary rank to be their descendants.

In the lifetime of Shakespear Thomas Thorpe the stationer quite prophetically acclaimed him “our ever-living poet,” and Aubrey, who died in 1697, at a period when the fame and recollection of the older school of dramatic writers were still under an eclipse, foresaw that the durability of Shakespear would rest on his dramatic works. “His comedies will remain wit,” he says, “as long

as the English tongue is understood, for that he handles *mores hominum*; now, our present writers reflect so much upon particular persons and coxcombities, that twenty years hence they will not be understood."¹ The Wiltshire antiquary did little more than echo the sentiments of Jonson, Milton, Davenant, and Dryden. He flourished, however, within measurable distance of Rowe, the poet's first critical editor (1709); and thenceforward we tread on different and on surer and surer ground. Yet even Pope—while, according to Spence, he pronounced Bacon "the greatest genius that England (or perhaps any country) ever produced"—condemned the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras as "a bad age," and thought that Rowe had done ill in writing a play on the Shakespearean model. In other words, Pope shewed far less discernment than Thorpe and Aubrey, yet he merely followed the track of Ravenscroft and others who, in their revivals of Shakespear, courageously pronounced them to be improved texts; and similarly, in his *Lettres Philosophiques*, 1734, Voltaire is found qualifying his admiration for the dramatist by impugning his taste and art. But Professor Raleigh has quite lately outshone all his predecessors, without being aware of having done so, by admitting the poet to the Gild of MEN OF LETTERS! He might perhaps class him, as a late J.P. for Surrey did, as a *clever man*.

The latest editors and biographers of Shakespear have not only dealt incompletely with some points, from an imperfect acquaintance, I presume, with the *data* or an inadequate valuation of their importance, but have left numerous others absolutely untouched. We are quite sufficiently ignorant of the career of the poet, and quite

¹ This remark might be stereotyped, so continual and successive is its applicability. Within my own time how many once resonant names have dropped out of notice; and it would be by no means difficult to compile a list—it would be a long one—of those, which are bound to follow in a few years. What does Montaigne say?—"De mon temps je suis trompé, si les pires escrits ne sont ceux qui ont gagné le dessus du vent populaire."

a sufficient proportion of our sources of knowledge has utterly perished, not to be able to afford to lose any promising clue or miss any valid suggestion; and it is imperative that every circumstance entitled to rank even as a highly probable fact should find a place, more especially as it may prove hereafter to be a link in a chain or a point in an argument.

There is the constant risk, while we are contemplating such a man, of hesitating to look at him in his strictly human aspect and day-by-day life, as one of ourselves, and, again, of being discouraged from entertaining what might, in an ordinary case, be accepted as reasonable propositions; and the extent, to which we are forced to avail ourselves of collation, analogy, and suggestion, is responsible, on the contrary, for some hardihood in guesswork.

Of the biography of Shakespear, pure and simple—the domestic Fasti, the researches and speculations of successive ages have gradually collected as much as we are, perhaps, entitled to expect in the case of one who was, as we may put it, almost wilfully and ostentatiously indifferent to his own fame, of whom his contemporaries and immediate after-comers have so little to say, and by possibility knew so little, and who had the fortune to be connected in blood with persons whose illiteracy and religious prejudices were unfavourable to the preservation of records of any kind. We have here, where such information and light might have been superlatively important and welcome, to face the disastrous consequences of the phenomenal apathy of the individual himself, succeeded and complemented by the distaste of certain members of his family for the pursuit and the monuments of it, which they were incapable of regarding with more than tolerance while the poet lived, and which they almost undoubtedly did their part in committing to oblivion when he was no more. If the wife and the daughters, and the Halls, and the Quineys, had been told that in these works the world would learn to recognize an *ipso facto* title to the first place among play-

wrights, among literary men, among English-speaking folk everywhere, and that from those pages the most religious might come away uncontaminated, these excellent provincial worthies would have been totally incredulous.

It is tantalizing and sad, when we look at the vestiges and clues, which such a man as Drummond of Hawthornden has left us,—a man of such unspeakably slighter importance—to think and find that, partly owing to the individual himself, partly, if not more, to his family, we are reduced in the present case to the construction of a house of cards, to piecing together a mosaic of broken and scattered fragments. For Shakespear had so much in common with the Scottish writer that, if the latter had inherited a fortune, the English one was at no time, subsequently to his earliest manhood, a needy man, and throughout all his later life in the enjoyment of comparative affluence and in a position to have taken measures to preserve materials for future biographers. Then, however, there is much in the remark of Bloomfield in his *Life of Thucydides*, that in accounts of their great men the ancients did not study or value that personal detail, which came into vogue only in comparatively modern times, and judged a bare outline of a career sufficient for the purposes of after-comers as it was for their own. The writers of *Memoirs* and *Diaries*, even when they arose, were of continental origin, and in the earliest examples of such literature of native extraction as we possess the entries calculated to be of service in this sort of way are notoriously scanty and casual. Of the long-surviving indifference or insensibility to authentic biographical particulars of eminent foregoers we have an illustration in Pepys, who might have told us so much about the antecedent literary school, but who does not even incidentally add a tittle to our knowledge of Shakespear and his contemporaries. The same is to be said of Evelyn, whose father was living side by side, so to speak, with the poet.

Then, again, in a different way, there was Dugdale,

who in his History of the County might have earned our gratitude by inserting some biographical facts about the most illustrious of all Warwickshire's sons and a view of the monument in its original purity, such as it was; and we know what really happened. Some at least of the plates to the work were probably, however, contributed by the parties immediately interested.

The critical acumen of the best judges of poetry in the course of a century and a half has exhausted itself in illustrating and emphasizing the intrinsic value and beauty of the plays and the unique genius of Shakespear; and, since he laid down his pen, others without number have busied themselves with the ambitious endeavour to merit the praise of creating something even distantly and faintly resembling these masterpieces.

Again, by a slow and tedious course of patient and scholarly investigation, the texts of the dramatic series (for the poems occupy different ground) have been raised to a standard of comparative purity, and the outcome, considering the almost desperate condition of numerous passages, is apt to strike us with astonishment, while it impresses us with gratitude. Shakespear was unjust to himself in leaving to posterity such an editorial trust, when it is borne in mind that it was in his own power to rectify at a glance typographical blunders or copyists' misreadings, which, under the most auspicious circumstances, we can only hope that we have set right.¹ Yet his labours have not descended to posterity in a much more corrupt state than those of many inferior writers, who have demanded and obtained at our hands a similar votive office; and in

¹ The Folio of 1623 and a few of the contemporary quartos embody, no doubt, alterations and corrections directly emanating from the hand of the poet, but perhaps so written, if they were not copied under his eye by a scrivener, as to be misunderstood, when the volume was sent to press, and to such a circumstance is due the considerable crop of *Errata* in the posthumous volumes; and, again, not a few slips, where the author himself in the separate plays chose to officiate as editor or corrector, and did not see a revise.

regard to his personal history his singular eminence deepens one's sense of the obscurity enveloping so much of it. Our exceptional admiration enhances our desire to learn more than we care to learn, if we could, about others, who did not deem him at all events more than such another as themselves.

The school of critical investigation of the more modern type may be said to have had as its pioneer the Rev. Joseph Hunter, who brought out in 1839 his *Disquisition on the Tempest* and in 1845 his *New Illustrations of Shakespeare*. One may appreciate, as I cordially do, Mr. Hunter's work without by any means concurring in all his views or conclusions.

The world of letters and culture is, and will always remain, under weighty obligations to Halliwell-Phillipps, who spared neither labour nor expense in laying before us all, for our use and enjoyment, the entire known *corpus* of documentary matter illustrative of the great writer, whom he made his life-study. Had it not been for him, in combination with a few others, who limited themselves to the authentic papers and particulars extant or discoverable, no account of the life and works of Shakespear would at the present moment be practicable. But Halliwell-Phillipps was never quite true to himself, partly from the necessity of printing his material as he accumulated it, and partly from the absence of an aptitude or taste for methodical arrangement; and, regarded as a book, his volumes represent little better than material. He may not be blameable for letting us hear what Dr. Johnson thought about the poet's origin and character; but he seems to be so, where he fails to estimate the relative weight of authorities, and, still more, where on one page he tells us that the Works are entirely impersonal, and elsewhere points out passages transferred to them from actual incidents in his career. In short, the *Outlines* are little more than *Collectanea*.

Mr. Fleay, in his *Chronicle History of the Life and Work of William Shakespear*, 1886, has performed a valuable

service in analyzing and dissecting much of the dramatic work of Shakespear and his fellow-playwrights, even if he renders us rather nervous and uncomfortable by the disclosures, which he makes of matter transmitted to us in an imperfect shape in addition to such as has been totally lost. This view is supported by the existence of a few MSS. copies, chiefly imperfect or even fragmentary, which betray the process, by which texts were sacrificed to theatrical exigencies. I hope that I may not be charged with undue presumption if I express the opinion, that Mr. Fleay, in his attributions of authorship, is rather adventurous and withal positive; and some of his *data* I am unable to accept. But I prefer not to encroach in these pages on his ground. One excellent point is, that he explicitly owns his obligations to Halliwell-Phillipps, whom he does not spare, nevertheless, if he catches him tripping. So we may get nearer the truth by a new species of reciprocity.

The conditions involved in the domestic arrangements of the poet during the greater and better part of his life, although they may be thought to possess no interest so long after the event, can be shown to ~~have~~ exerted a large measure of influence on his literary progress and history, and are, at any rate, nearly as unique as himself. We know that Stratford friends and neighbours settled in London both before and about the time, when Shakespear resided there, and that some of them valuably contributed to his success as a dramatist and actor, and that two of his own brothers were of the number. There is positive testimony that he was in Stratford at irregular intervals. But there is absolutely no suggestion that his father or mother, wife or daughters, ever quitted their native county, that they cast eyes on any of the distinguished friends whom he had collected round him, save perhaps Jonson and Drayton, and possibly Richard Burbage the actor and artist; that they were spectators at any performance where he was both author and actor, or that they perused a single production of his mighty pen.

There are perhaps more volumes by Shakespear, certainly relating to him, at the present moment in one or two public repositories in Stratford, than the town ever possessed in the time of the poet and his immediate descendants. No name of a book-collector belonging to the place or the vicinity, except the Lucys and perhaps the Skipwiths of Newbold Revel, who, however, were somewhat later settlers hereabout,¹ has come down to us. In a literary respect it was with one signal exception an absolutely sterile soil, unless we agree to couple with Shakespear such a man as Burbage.

The rather extensive series recognized as Shakespear Allusion-Books must not be dismissed as without their value, nor are they valueless. Yet the majority of them are strangely uninforming and uncritical. Of compliment they are lavish enough, but it is a sort of praise which fails to discriminate; and with the fewest possible exceptions we find Shakespear grouped with other writers, between whom and himself the distance has grown immeasurable. It is mainly on the notices of him and his works during his life that we should lay stress, and Meres in 1598, Jonson in 1602, and Thorpe in 1609 (avowedly in the *Sonnets* and by implication in the *Troilus and Cressida*) are the only panegyrists falling within that category; for Milton, Davenant, and Dryden did not give expression to their sentiments till the poet was no more, and Davenant and Dryden till the perspective began to lengthen, and his intellectual relation to other authors could be more impartially discussed. The two copies of posthumous lines by Jonson, which accompany the folio of 1623, recognized the *wit* of his old friend and almost insinuated that in the Droeshout portrait it was not adequately represented, even if he had seen that portrait, when he set down the sentiment; and he placed Shakespear above Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe. Lyly and Kyd stood

¹ My *Roll of Honour*, 1908, may be consulted under Warwickshire in Topographical Index, for a register of all the collectors in the county; but the names are chiefly of personages of post-Shakespearean date.

at a lower level than Marlowe, and neither was well susceptible of being compared with the other, while the collocation of Marlowe with Shakespear was by no means unfair and improper, if we look at the work executed by him at the time of his premature death and that ostensibly or otherwise so far produced by the Stratford poet. Nor is it in the least degree problematical, when we observe the advance made by Marlowe between the composition of *Dido* and that of *Edward II.*, that, had he been spared, he would of all the Elizabethan poets have most nearly approached the author of *Hamlet*. He died, like Randolph at a later date, in his twenty-ninth year; he was Shakespear's junior by a twelvemonth; and these three, weighing all the circumstances, take the lead among the writers of the Elizabethan and Stuart eras. The impression on the mind of Jonson, when he signalized the genius of Marlowe, apparently was, that it was powerful and undisciplined; in other words, that he had great passages, but was unequal, which is precisely what he might have affirmed of Shakespear. But the latter was spared to give us better work, and Marlowe was not.

The Allusion-Books easily and obviously divide themselves into those which belong to the life-time of the poet and those which cover the posthumous period down to the close of the seventeenth century. Of the latter group, exceedingly few are of any real pertinence or interest; but we have to except more or less emphatically the notices by Davenant in 1638, by Milton in 1645, and by Dryden in 1668. The rest are eulogistic enough, but trivial, sometimes to the point of neutrality. They have received far more attention than they merit from the universal and indiscreet ardour which seizes on every scrap of print or MS. bearing the magical name. The most essential memorials of this class are to be read in the *Outlines*; and it is due to Davenant ever to keep in mind that it is believed to have been, partly at least, to his inspiration that Dryden owed his views about Shakespear. Two other groups of Shake-

speareana are works of reference, to which the poet owed certain phrases, and books of or about his own time, which yielded him suggestions on points of custom or belief; and both are alike prone to extravagant or rash acceptance, if we reflect that Shakespear probably resorted to the volume nearest at hand at the moment, and secondly that great allowance has to be made, in estimating more weighty obligations, for coincidences of thought, which occur in authors, whose books he almost unquestionably never beheld.

A class of parallel, to the indication of which there can be nothing to object, is, where in some obscure and ancient foreign work, which was perhaps unknown even to English scholars in the sixteenth century, passages are found, exactly corresponding in substance with passages in Shakespear, and the sole solution seems to be, that the sentiment involved is one, which might occur to any one at any period.

Shakespear's Library, which was re-edited in 1875 by the present writer, is usually treated as a sort of repertory, whence the dramatist derived in large measure his plots and incidents, if not his inspiration and cues. The volumes are supposed to place the reader and student in the track of the bulk of Shakespear's prototypes and *prima stamina*, and to enable them to judge his varying degrees of obligation and his unquestionable triumph over his originals; and it scarcely entered into the plan of the last Editor to challenge the validity of the notion from a critical standpoint. Placing oneself, however, between *Shakespear's Library* and Shakespear's Plays, and exercising a not very arduous or lengthened amount of comparative analysis, one arrives at the fairly confident, and perhaps not unwelcome, conclusion, that our national poet was to the book-case which we have filled on his behalf, an insignificant debtor. Shakespear was assuredly by no means unwilling to avail himself of suggestions, as well as of all the advantage which an existing outline or skeleton confers; but he met, so far as our present knowledge enables us to form an opinion, with little enough in print or in manuscript, when he started as a writer

for the stage, fit for use in his estimation, till it had undergone not merely recension, but an almost thorough metamorphosis.

Shakespear had before him, when he conceived the design of adding himself to an already numerous circle of caterers for the theatres, several productions, which had been already dramatized, and had met with success and applause. Of these, some have been handed down to us; others, such as the old *Hamlet* and the *Jew of Venice*, have seemingly disappeared, while the original *Lear*, licensed in 1593-4, is possessed by us only in a reprint of 1605. But the coming master had them all, and even more than we know by report, under his eyes and at his disposal, and was superior to the modern necessity of classifying this body of matter into existing remains and lost evidences, of which the latter have their provoking side, not to be altogether dislodged by arguing from the known to the unknown.

The estimation of the poet by those who lived in or about his time was warped or straitened by the absence of perspective and the deficiency of proper facilities for critical comparison; and it was necessarily disproportionate. There are still among us such as regard and describe him as a *clever man*—one of the most hateful and ridiculous of misnomers; and if the very term was not in use, the majority entertained during his life-time an opinion not very dissimilar. For if a person of the observant and experienced mind of Jonson—an intimate friend and a professed admirer—had the power to see so little more, is it remarkable that readers in general should have been qualified to measure him? Whatever eulogy we find bestowed on Shakespear, we find equally bestowed on others; and how newly is it, that even the more discerning have readjusted old systems of precedence, and taught us to distinguish between schools of writing and orders of intellect! The homage to genius of the most exalted type, the reparation of humanity for well-nigh two centuries of neglect—how modern! how tardy! The object of an almost idolatrous worship to all

cultivated men and women everywhere has long left behind him that irrepassable bourn, which he descried, and has found the undiscovered country to which he pointed. *Nobis non nostra*. Shakespear left certain drachmas and a certain "space of dirt" to his own by blood; the rest, the richest, descended to unscheduled heirs, an unknown posterity, inseparable contemporaries:—

"Thou hast into the dark still country cross'd,
And shaken off this life-long dream of pain :
And since thy most lov'd attributes remain,
Let us reflect how little we have lost."

There is the contemporary aspect of the question, the views of the person most immediately and nearly concerned included. I do not contemplate, at the moment, the perpetuity of fame or the unapproached pre-eminence of intellect which it has asked centuries to discover and concede; but, considering Shakespear in relation to his time, his self-appraisement, and that practical success, to which there was so evident a side-look through all the later life: considering that, when the antecedent school of dramatic poetry had disappeared, he was without a rival during so many years, an object of marked attention to his sovereign, on terms of personal acquaintance with members of her Court, in even higher favour with her successor and the new Stuart regime, and the winner of panegyrics from some of his fellows, who would have challenged his supremacy, had it been in their power: all this was realizable by the individual who fixed himself in London in 1587, and found himself a man of fortune ten years after, successful in all his enterprises saving one—his marriage and its incidence down to the last.

I
PERSONAL HISTORY

▲

SHAKESPEAR:

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

CHAPTER I

The parentage and early life of Shakespear—His rural experiences and opportunities — His visits to London as a youth — His marriage and the circumstances connected with it — The Lucy legend — The Hathaways.

1563-86

THE present biographical thesis opens abruptly, and is not capable of being carried back by existing evidences beyond the sixteenth century. But the prevailing conditions of the rural population of England at that time, and both before and after, were so stationary, that there is the slightest possible risk of error in concluding that the ancestry of the subject of this Memoir had continued during an almost indefinite period to occupy the same social rank.

John Shakespear,¹ one of the two sons of Richard Shake-

¹ We hear of other Shakespears, not only in Warwickshire, but in London, Bedfordshire, Yorkshire, Cumberland, &c., mostly in a humble station. In Warwickshire and Gloucestershire they appear as early as the thirteenth century. Out of thousands of them how many do we remember? The name is found in London in 1488, where Thomas Shakespear apprentices himself to the Leathersellers' Gild (*Black's History of the Leathersellers*, 1871, p. 68). George Shakespear was Master of the Company, 1743-4. But contemporary with the poet were Edward Shakespear of St. Giles, Cripplegate, and Thomas Shakespear of the same parish, whose name, however, does not occur till 1618 (*Collier's Memoirs of Actors*, 1846, pp. xv-xvi). For notices of Shakespears at Campton in Bedfordshire, 1575-1654, in a humble sphere of life, see *Times* newspaper, Aug. 7, 1903.

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spear, a working farmer on the estate of Robert Arden or Ardern, a prosperous yeoman of Great Wilmecote, a hamlet of Aston Cantlow, in Warwickshire, was probably born about 1530, and commenced life under his father. Their common landlord, Robert Arden, was of the same stock as those of Wye, subsequently Faversham, in Kent; and the family is traced as settled in Warwickshire as far back as 1501—a date which has a certain biographical bearing on the individual with whom these pages are primarily concerned. We do not hear anything of the motive, which induced John Shakespear to quit his father's roof; but he removed about 1551 to Stratford-on-Avon, where he gradually emerges from the position of a small tradesman dealing in saleable commodities into prominence as a burgess and holder of the highest municipal offices. He had not dissolved his connection with his original home, and when his affairs began to succeed, he married Mary, one of the daughters of Arden of Wilmecote. It was perhaps a preconcerted union, on which the bride's father may have fairly looked with disfavour and distrust, where the suitor was of unequal standing and circumstances, and its occurrence at a very short date after Arden's death in 1556 tends to confirm such a view. It may be a serviceable suggestion that the young man hoped in an urban centre to establish himself in business, and render the alliance more acceptable. The Ardens, however, although in point of pecuniary means they were superior to the family, into which their daughter had married, and although Mary herself was a woman of character, were far from being people of social culture or even of education; and altogether the husband and wife were not ill-suited to each other. Of the latter the vestiges are infinitesimally slight; of the father of the poet we begin to discover a few casual and isolated facts. As an officer of the corporation he soon appreciated the expediency of supplying his shortcoming in calligraphy by procuring a seal with *J.S.* to accompany his mark.

He has been loosely described as a butcher; but it was

a very early practice on the part of provincial dealers to combine several branches of industry, especially where they dovetailed into each other. Dr. Simon Forman in his *Autobiography* apprises us that during his apprenticeship to Matthew Comins of Salisbury, his master dealt in a multifarious variety of goods. The case of the elder Shakespear was so far different that, so far as we can make out, he attempted nothing outside the direct or indirect incidence of his vocation as a grazier and butcher.

There is no justification for supposing that the union of John Shakespear with Mary Arden continued during a protracted term to be otherwise than a happy one: they had been man and wife two-and-twenty years, before the troubles began, and they were even then of a commercial, not domestic character. It is difficult to conjecture what might have happened, had the father not transferred himself to Stratford, had the couple remained on the old ground. We are left to speculate, how far the alliance would have yielded in such a case the unique germ, which has made all the world think and talk of it ever since, and whether the pilgrim would now be directing his steps, not to Stratford, but to Wilmecote.

Far less ample information is forthcoming in regard to the functions and rank of the butcher of antecedent eras than we possess concerning those of many other crafts and craft-gilds, and such a deficiency of material largely proceeds from the loss of archives by fire and other causes. The older muniments of the Butchers' Gild in London have almost without exception perished; one pertinent fact is, that a freeman of it by patrimony, without being an operative member even so much as the father of the poet, was Daniel, son of James Foe. Of an analogous one in many of our provincial towns, even in places of importance, the authorities have little or nothing to tell us; and, to come to the more immediate point, there seems to be no vestige of any fraternity of the kind at Stratford-on-Avon or at Warwick itself. The explanation may be sought in the restricted call during the Elizabethan period for the com-

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modities normally supplied by the butcher in such a place as Stratford; and the same reason is perhaps susceptible of being given for the ostensible practice on the part of John Shakespear of combining with his supposed business as a butcher not only that of a grazier, but that of a glover or even a shoemaker, since, so far as the two latter employments go, such articles were commonly manufactured of neat's leather, often not too skilfully or carefully dressed, judging from the great Bacon's reported dislike to the smell, and prohibition of its use by his own body-servants.

Drayton was equally a Warwickshire man and a butcher's son; but he seems to have been lifted at a very early age out of the immediate environment of his birthplace, and we do not know whether his father was a man of the same type as the elder Shakespear, or a butcher in the sense that the father of Keats was. A parallel illustration of the error apt to arise from failing to distinguish between ancient and modern commercial life exists in the case of Jonson, whose stepfather is described as a bricklayer, and who is represented as seeking to induce his young relative to carry a hod with as large an amount of truth or even probability as the silly tale transmitted to us by Aubrey of Shakespear and the calf. Mrs. Jonson's second husband was doubtless of the Bricklayers' Gild, not an artizan; and Dyce perpetrates, I conceive, a similar error in referring to Anthony Munday as *a draper*.¹ It was John Benson of Westminster, described as a bricklayer, who drew the plan for Alleyn of Dulwich College, and executed the brickwork, that is, superintended it,² as Mr. BurrIDGE did at Goldsmiths' Hall after the Fire of 1666,³ and such examples might be readily multiplied.

A yet more striking disproof of the common notion

¹ Reprint of *Kempes Nine Daies Wonder*, 1840, p. 32. The letter of Henslowe to Alleyn, 26th September, 1598, referring to Jonson as a bricklayer, is doubtless a forgery.

² Brayley and Britton's *Surrey*, iii. 220.

³ Hazlitt's *Livery Companies*, 1892, p. 650.

on this subject may be said to lie in the biography of Christopher Marlowe, who has been almost contemptuously described as the son of a shoemaker at Canterbury, yet whose father was a member of the well-established Cordwainers' and Tanners' Gild there, and a man occupying a good social position in the city, who enjoyed the means of sending his son to as excellent a school as Shakespear frequented at Stratford.

Sir John Mennis, the admiral and versifier (1598-1670), makes the father of the poet not merely a glover, but the keeper of a glove-shop, according to an entry in the MS. commonplace-book of Archdeacon Plume, written between 1657 and 1663 in East Anglia. The shop is unlikely; but unluckily the Archdeacon makes Mennis speak of having seen the father in it, which is impossible. He was not more than three years of age, when John Shakespear died.

John Shakespear, in short, may have been concurrently the follower of several allied callings, and whatever the precise range of his occupations was, it was not unattended by vicissitudes, which became acute, and toward the date, when his son William was just completing his education at the excellent local grammar-school,¹ the parents were under a dark cloud. In 1578-9 they had already borrowed money of friends or connections, and they subsequently mortgaged the maternal estate of Asbies for £40, and sold two houses in Snitterfield, to meet pressing claims or as a means of raising ready money. The sum produced by the mortgage was equal to £250 of modern currency. John Shakespear became more and more an absentee from the councils; his name disappears from the records in August, 1580, when his fellow-townsmen, as a token of sympathy, paid eightpence for a pall at the burial of one of his daughters. He is once more mentioned in 1585, and was superseded in 1586, the very year in which his son is thought to have finally settled in London.

¹ Shakespear's master appears to have been a Mr. Acton, who received £20 as his year's wages in 1570-1. In 1572-3 a Mr. Roche succeeded him. The later names are of no immediate interest.

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A certain Griffin ap-Roberts resided at Stratford in those days, and belonged to the same trade, if not commercial brotherhood, as the poet's father. Aubrey alleges that Nicholas ap-Roberts, son of Griffin, was a youthful acquaintance of Shakespear. The question has been mooted, whether there was a scheme which failed, for bringing up the latter to the paternal business by apprenticing him to Roberts; and while the statements of Aubrey are not unfrequently loose and inexact, there is such a form of danger as unreasoning and misplaced scepticism. For the years, which would be represented and covered by a trial of this sort, even by more than one, are enveloped in absolute darkness.

That he should have yielded to the wishes of his father in the first instance, and have taken articles under Roberts, is therefore plausible enough. It is abundantly probable that the elder Shakespear entertained, as so many parents do, the idea and the prospect that his eldest son would join him in his business; and had such been the case, the result might have been more favourable. Nor was John Shakespear perhaps more easily converted than other fathers to the belief that his heir, in making a temporary motive for leaving Stratford the turning-point of his life and of a different career, was not guilty of a very rash and headstrong act. The Queen's players, and those of Lord Worcester, Lord Warwick, Lord Leicester, and others, who presumably visited the Warwickshire town in their provincial tours, had exercised, it is extremely reasonable to infer, a strong fascination on the mind of a youth so constituted, more particularly, where the father had some bias in a similar direction; and when, not the deer-stealing trouble, but financial embarrassment at home, came, to London Shakespear at once proceeded, as to a centre, which he already knew, and where there was scope for energy and talent.

Shakespear presumably passed the whole of his unmarried career under the paternal roof, of which every pilgrim to Stratford has the opportunity of realizing for himself, within

some points at least, the contemporary aspect and capacity ;¹ it is apt to impress one with the notion of being humble and contracted for such a family as that of the father, especially where the owner or tenant was a person of some local eminence. There, however, we are to conclude that nearly twenty years of the poet's life were spent with his parents and his brothers and sisters, with an amount of accommodation and amenity not less scanty and cramped than is incidental to many rural households of later days ; there is no precise account, no domestic clues even of the slenderest kind to assist us, save the warrantable inference that once, or possibly more than once, as a lad he visited London, where he was able to rely on his fellow-townsmen, who had already migrated to the metropolis, and where he became (probably through them) acquainted with the Burbages and Tarlton the actor, and that such journeys by road with their ever varying incidence could not do otherwise than enlarge and enrich his experience. Those journeys, where any appreciable distance was to be traversed, yielded far more in the way of adventure and observation than the hurried travelling of our time, for they were accomplished only by stages.

A brief excursus may be of some value as contributing to a knowledge of the ideas, which prevailed, when Shakespear plighted his faith to Agnes or Anne Hathaway, supposed to have belonged to Shottery. Whether the poet carried into practice his own apparent views as a writer in his private capacity and in his youth, it is hard to determine ; but in the *Winter's Tale* through Leontes he likens (Act i. Scene 2) a wife, who admits familiarity before her troth-plight, to a flax-wench ; but then he allows the validity of troth-plight without formal matrimony. A second curious point is, that in the same play (Act ii. Scene 1) Antigonus vows, that he will geld his three daughters before they reach their fourteenth year, lest they should breed bastards.

A legal treatise, of which the contents are dry and

¹ An excellent engraving of it by B. Cole after R. Greene is to be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1769.

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technical enough, was published in 1632 under the title of "The Laws' Resolution of Women's Rights." The sole interest of the book for my immediate purpose centres in the sections on *Sponson* or Hand-fastening, namely, 1. Of Sponson or first promising; 2. Of publike Sponson; 3. *Of secret Sponson*; and there are two other clauses bearing on the subject, which is of some considerable moment in relation to the pre-matrimonial contract in 1582 between the poet and his future or destined wife.

The first section cited commences thus: "The first promising and inception of Marriage is in two parts, either it is plaine, simple and naked, or confirmed and borne by giving of something; the first is, when a man and woman binde themselves simply by their word only to Contract Matrimonie hereafter: the second, when there is an oath made, or somewhat taken as an earnest or pledge betwixt them on both parts, or on one part, to be married hereafter." The writer proceeds to describe Public Sponson: "This Sponson (in which as it stands, is no full Contract of Matrimony, nor any more, saue only an obligation, or being bound in a sort to marry hereafter) may be publike or secret: publike, either by the parties themselves, present together, or by message or Letters when they be distant one from another: . . ." But perhaps the most pertinent part is the definition of secret sponson:—"Those Sponsals which are made when a man is without witnesse, *Solus cum sola*, are called secret promising or desponsation, which though it be tolerable, when by liquid & plaine probation it may appear to the Judge, and there is not any lawfull impediment to hinder the Contract, yet it is so little esteemed of, (vnlesse it be very manifest) that another promise publike made after it, shall be preferred and prevaile against it. . . ." It is added that the promise must be unconditional, and two or three years' grace was allowable, according to the place of residence of the proposed husband, before the woman was at liberty to seek another union. We find nothing here about rush rings and

such abuses of confidence, nor is the earnest indicated in the text defined. Females might not betroth themselves under *seven* years of age; at fourteen a woman was *hors du garde* for her body, not for her hand.¹

There is a tolerably circumstantial account of the journey of the poet in 1582, accompanied by his two sureties, Fulk Sandells and John Richardson of Shotttery, in the parish of Stratford, who are described as *husbandmen* or farmers, friends of the Hathaways, and evidently in the fullest enjoyment of their confidence, and for what they undertook here—sufficient, as Shylock said of Antonio—to Worcester to arrange with the episcopal ordinary respecting the ante-nuptial bond. The coming master and his fellow-travellers walked or rode thither, all alike unconscious of what was going to happen by-and-by, as Bourrienne and Bonaparte were, when they threaded the streets, and haunted the *cafés*, of Paris together. Unluckily Shakespear's friends did not prove so communicative as the Frenchman.

Sunday was, as it yet remains, from economical or other motives, a common day for the humbler sort of marriages, and was so in the country. The line in Shakespear:—

“ And kiss me, Kate, we will be married o' Sunday,”

is admissible as applied to a rural or even ordinary celebration of matrimony, and he followed the foundation-play here. Master Roister Doister had fixed that time for his nuptials long before, and there is the remark of Benedick upon the proposed marriage of Claudio: “ Go to, i' faith:

¹ In many parts of England, Wales, and Scotland, even to the Hebrides, there was well within living memory, and is in fact still, a principle of betrothal or nuptial pre-engagement, which suffers variant degrees of intimacy before actual marriage, according to the social rank of the parties, but admits to much too large an extent a licence, which is apt to be productive of disaster through indiscretion on either side; and something of this sort, no doubt, occurred in the case before us. An unwritten law preceded any on this subject committed to record, and the rule of chastity seems to have been observed with tolerable strictness. It was a method of obviating one of the drawbacks of a clothed state and a rather dangerous and unwise one.

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an' thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays." Had the poet his own mournful experience before his eyes? But it is hardly so appropriate, where, in the *Famous Victories of Henry V.*, 1598 (but written earlier), the anonymous writer makes the English prince fix his union with the French monarch's daughter for the sabbath—a passage, which does not recur in the Shakespear play. Were the poet and Anne Hathaway united on a Sunday? The ceremony did not take place, of course, at Stratford, nor were the Shakespears apparently parties to the arrangement, and no entry of the event has been discovered. We observe that in the closing scene of the *Taming of a Shrew*, Petruchio says: "Come on, and kiss me, Kate"—as a prelude to the consummation of marriage; but the old ritual provided only for a ceremonial kiss in the church.¹

There can be slight hesitation in concluding that the daughter of Richard Hathaway was her lover's senior, that some degree of undue forestalment occurred,² owing at all events in some measure to the mistress's sufferance, and that, as years elapsed, the retrospect became to the poet, in spite of legal euphemism, something of the judgment, which he has depicted in the first scene of the fourth act of the *Tempest*, when the end was not far distant, and the cup of bitterness, which had become only too familiar to his lips, when in *As You Like It* Jaques apostrophises "a miserable world," and in *Hamlet* there is that despondent view of posthumous fame, had been drunk almost to the dregs. But in the latter drama, where Polonius says to Ophelia:

"When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Gives the tongue vows!—"

the writer of the passage perhaps recollected his own ardour and its fruits.

¹ Hazlitt's *Faiths and Folklore*, 1906, p. 356.

² Much laxity, no doubt, prevailed, has always done so, in this direction in rural districts, where greater facilities exist for irregular relations between the sexes, and did so in Shakespear's day to a far larger extent.

Anne Hathaway's father died in 1581,¹ just prior to her marriage, leaving to her upon that event £6, 13s. 4d. or about £60 of our present money. There was another daughter Catherine, a name which seems to have lingered unfavourably in Shakespear's mind on some ground, which has ceased to be traceable. But the cottage at Shottery is to be regarded as the home of the family rather than of the poet's future wife, and may or may not have been Anne's birthplace, as she was probably born about 1560. If the latter retained her father's legacy, it was a not unimportant aid to the young couple, when they became man and wife in 1582, and we seem to have a warrant for inferring that the engagement was known to the bride's father, when he executed his will more than a twelvemonth prior.

A reconstruction of the contemporary Hathaway residence is impracticable save by guesswork. The Hathaways and Shakespears may have been approximately of the same social standing, and the *Ardens* of Great Wilmercote or Wincote may be treated as occupying a co-ordinate position to their Kentish namesakes and connections. The rush-bed, of which one end was usually turned back to serve as a pillow, is supposed to have been one article of furniture in the cottage, and was common at that period, as it had been long before, to dwellings and personages of all ranks.

The biographers do not throw the least light on his movements from 1582, when he was formally united to Anne Hathaway, to 1586, when he proceeded to London alone, to return only at intervals. Within those years, while a family was growing up, the young couple must have occupied their own premises in Stratford, where the municipal records amply shew that apartments were available for such as were unable or unwilling to afford a separate house; but their whereabouts and the entire domiciliary question are irretrievable; and all that we distinguish of

¹ Precisely in the same way the marriage of John Shakespear closely succeeded the death of the father-in-law.

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the early married days is a speculative glimpse in the 143rd Sonnet and a reference by Ophelia in *Hamlet* to the tune, which suited the spinning-wheel, unless the poet preserved the recollection in later days of a sheep's heart washed for his dinner by his wife, and made Rosalind, a duke's daughter, familiar with the process, when he was writing *As You Like It*. It may just as soon have happened in Henley Street days. Nor do we know whether that odd feature in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—Launce and his dog—has a retrospective personal significance. Of the poet's resources in those four or five years we know nothing beyond the Hathaway dowry of £6, 13s. 4d. But during a portion of that time John Shakespear still continued to maintain his position and his power of rendering help.

There was an ample interval between 1563,¹ the date of birth, and 1586-7, that of removal to London, for much in the way of adventure and misadventure for a youth in the fullest enjoyment of health and energy, discharging commissions for his father in different directions, or bent on sport and pleasure. He was neither better nor worse than his comrades at and round Stratford, and could have told us not a little, that we are never to know. How far may we follow home that sentence addressed by Hamlet to Ophelia: "I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me. . . ." It is thus with most of us; but few live to store up such incidents, and to render them part of the national property by selection and refinement, as Shakespear did in certain passages of his Sonnets and other Poems, and in the comic parts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, and other pieces. He gave the audience all that he deemed it likely that it would care to hear. He has

¹ In a copy of Beza's *New Testament*, 1598, there is a coeval autograph of John Smith, whom we find described as "an Author and Linguist," and who was born in Warwickshire in 1563 and died there in 1616. He was therefore in the absolute sense Shakespear's contemporary.

permitted us to witness bucolic scenes, which were familiar to him, *exceptis excipiendis*.

The years immediately antecedent to the settlement in London enabled one so keenly observant and so retentive of what he saw and heard to accumulate countless points outside the immediate theatrical range at a time, when he had yet to fix his choice of a calling, before he went up to the metropolis, uncertain what might happen; and two of the most conspicuous illustrations of this instinctive and fruitful drift manifest themselves in the exceptionally ample space allotted in *A Winter's Tale* to a sheep-shearing; doubtless, a transfer from real life, and in the Induction to the *Taming of a Shrew*, which was proximately suggested by a very slight hint in the foundation-play of 1594. By birth and by instinct both on his father's and mother's side his training was rural, and he enjoyed a conversance from earliest adolescence with the costume of the countryside; but, unlike a modern poet's Peter Bell, he soon learned to see in everything about him beauty and wisdom hidden from the less privileged eyes of the agriculturists and mechanics around him. Nor is there any lack of testimony that he occasionally, on business or otherwise, passed over into the bordering counties of Oxford and Gloucester. In one of his historical plays he may have remembered a visit to the Cotswolds and the view of Berkeley Castle from Stinchcombe Hill; and indeed in the *Merry Wives* Slender is made to ask Page, whether his fallow greyhound was not outrun on Cotsol? and these local *minutiæ* abound in certain of the dramas.

Aubrey thought that the poet might have received a suggestion of Dogberry from a constable at Crendon in Buckinghamshire, who was still living in 1642, when Aubrey first went to Oxford.

Whence he drew the inimitable Falstaff, it is not so easy to decide. He impresses one as an ideal creation or some model, encountered by the poet in his travels or rambles, enlarged and enriched to produce the masterly and over-

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coming presentment, which is before us, and which the actual original might have barely recognized. For there was of course a germ, on which this superstructure was erected, as a tattooed skull is said to have been the basis of the Gothic architecture.

The luxuriant comic scenes in some of the earlier plays, and the presence of a vein, almost descending to farce, though refinement itself in comparison with the source whence it was borrowed, in the induction to the *Taming of a Shrew*, and the interlude dropped into the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where it divides with the fairies the attention of the audience and the reader, are to be traced to the ill-dated interval between 1574 and 1586. From independent sources and quarters—Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Suffolk¹—we gather that there was a practice, as early as 1511, of performing stage plays in the country, either in market-towns or elsewhere, by subscription among all the adjacent villages, and that these spectacles were of a varied character—allegorical, moral, and humorous. Companies from the metropolis sometimes exhibited them; sometimes they were arranged on the spot with properties borrowed from the nearest urban centre; but at first, while they were limited to religious subjects—and the poet may well have been an edified spectator, just when such a type was growing out of fashion—they occupied a considerable time in the representation, and already in 1511 we hear of minstrels, refreshment, and playbooks, and of a handsome balance of profit on the expenses. Lyndsay's *Satire of the Three Estates* is said to have been publicly performed at Cupar in 1540,² at Linlithgow in the same year, and in 1544 near Edinburgh, where Henry Charteris, the printer of the edition of 1568, tells us that he witnessed the exhibition, sitting nine hours

¹ *My Manual of Old English Plays*, 1892, pp. 53, 161, 201; *A. C. Mery Talys*, 1526, repr. 1887, fol. 1; Hazlitt's *Warton*, ii. 233. The custom is still observed in some foreign localities. A quite recent English traveller in the Basque provinces found, on crossing the frontier, a company of peasants performing a religious drama in a booth.

² Ellis, *Original Letters*, 3rd Series, iii. 283.

on the bank at Greenside.¹ In 1540 the so-called Comedy of *Dionysius the Tyrant*, by James Wedderburn, was represented at Dundee.² Curiously enough, Witney itself was almost, if not quite down to the age of Shakespear, the scene of an annual exhibition of a play on the Resurrection, of which Lambarde has left his youthful reminiscences. It was mainly a puppet-show, but a man, popularly known as *Jack Snacker of Witney*, took the part of the watchman.³ Considering that biographers have to account for a full dozen years of Shakespear's youth, during which his intervals of leisure were considerable, it is not too much to suppose that he was an occasional spectator at these entertainments, when they had begun to assume a secular and even humorous character, and that, while they tended to form his taste, they lingered in a tenacious memory, till the unforeseen opportunity presented itself of turning such recollections to substantial and advantageous account. If a boy like Willis of Gloucester could recall at seventy-five the *Cradle of Security*, which he had seen so long before, and which is quoted in the play of *Sir Thomas More*, 1560, and in Greene's *Arbusto*, 1584, as if it had been a perfectly recent occurrence, Shakespear is far likelier to have treasured up these juvenile experiences. He clung to them only too fondly, and forsooth there are cases, where even in his ripe dramatic work his first schooling, as I take it to have been, has exerted a pernicious influence. He carried throughout his professional course too pronounced a leaning to farce and fun—those of the rustics, whom he had had under his eyes, whom he may have helped to learn their parts, of whom he may have perchance now and again made one, as *Æschylus* may have mixed in the coarse dramatic spectacles of his boyhood, and have been thus inspired to attempt higher things. There long survived the persuasion that the leading characteristic and merit of the poet was low comedy.

¹ Dickson and Edmond, *Annals of Scottish Printing*, 1890, p. 348.

² See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, p. 64.

³ See my *Warton*, vol. ii. p. 221.

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For the unnamed author of *Anglorum Speculum*, 1684, observed that "although his genius was jocular, he could be solemn and serious when occasion required, as appears in his tragedies." The advance in almost three-quarters of a century from 1616 toward a true gauge of the man was only just so much as this. I must return to the point hereafter; but I will add that the sole audible remark of John Shakespear seems to have been much to the same effect—that his son was prone to playing jokes.

The purely rural presentations were almost necessarily selections or abridgments, which would demand a certain amount of judgment. In the Oxfordshire example, some countrymen from Stanton-Harcourt had rehearsed their parts during some time, and travelled to Witney, where the play (*Mucedorus*) was to be performed. There was an accident, which the writer of the account evidently ascribed to divine wrath. Here was the case, however, where a lengthened coaching was undertaken, doubtless under the eye of a comparative expert. The disposition to connect this drama to a limited extent with Shakespear prompts the suggestion, that at a place, only twelve miles from Oxford, some adaptation of a piece thus associated with the poet may have been exhibited on prior occasions under his eye and with his assistance. There is a fortuitous indication of the practice of calling on a playwright or even a performer of experience to write a prologue for rural theatricals. There is among the Ashmole MSS. one composed for such a purpose by William Barkstead—probably Barkstead the actor and poet.

We gain only a casual idea of the class of piece presented in rural districts in those days. The *Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalen*, 1566, is said in the prologue to have been exhibited on the boards at a charge of a halfpenny or a penny, which reads like a provincial tariff. *Multa renascentur*. In January, 1904, a play was rehearsed and performed in a Kentish village near Tonbridge by the villagers themselves.

Broad and coarse as the early English farce, no doubt, was, it never reached the outrageous grossness of the popular pieces composed for French audiences, which a recent editor of these *Sotties* justly stigmatizes as "ordurières," nor did Shakespeare judge desirable, when he set about such matters, even the very modified licence of the native productions of this class, which had been in vogue just before his day.

This local preparation for what was to come, reasonably as it may be allowed by analogy, assists in elucidating that otherwise rather unintelligible and rather incongruous element in some of the plays, to which I have called attention, and which has to be distinguished from the more appreciable humour of Falstaff. In his latest productions, the early influence of the country grows less perceptible, yet it does not entirely disappear.

I ascribe with some warrant and confidence to the period, antecedent to a final settlement in London in or about 1586, that practical and exact knowledge of country life and character, of which the fruit is alike visible in the Poems and Plays. His attendance on his father in his varied daily employments alone familiarized him with an immense store and diversity of rural experience; there was, besides, the incidental intercourse with agricultural relatives and neighbours; and the periodical journeys to and from London must have been helpful. Aubrey is of opinion that Shakespeare and Jonson were equally indebted to this sort of study from the life; and one acquires the notion, that direct and ocular suggestion formed no insignificant part of the Stratford writer's library—human documents more veracious than books. Yet outside the route between his home and the theatre of his labours, and the environs of London, I fail to trace the poet, as regards his travelling range, beyond Windsor, Kent,¹ Sussex, and Somersetshire.

¹ Communication with Kent at last had been facilitated by the establishment of a postal service under official auspices, yet in 1601 it occupied a messenger with despatches for Sir Robert Cecil twenty-one hours to proceed from Dover to Dartford by road.

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Within such limits, however, what an abundance of types and models!

That some potent motive actuated the poet in leaving his native town, where he had serious personal responsibilities and intimate ties, is undeniable; and it is not less likely that he may have at times been implicated singly or with others in certain irregularities in the direction of poaching. Nevertheless I apprehend that the traditional account of his flight from Stratford to avoid the resentment of Sir Thomas Lucy is very far from a statement of the real circumstances, is in fact totally erroneous, and that, if there was a juvenile indiscretion, it is more likely to have been when he was sent up to London to be out of the way for a season, several years prior to 1586.

I gather from unmistakable allusions, that when he made his way to London on this as well as on former occasions, he rode on horseback, as Peele the dramatist did, when he visited Oxford, Bristol, and other places, breaking the journey at some intermediate stage; but he may have also made use of the waggons or the carts, which traversed the intermediate space, and carried both passengers and goods. What a different spectacle Stratford presented when he left or reached it! Yet not more so than London. We have in the Stratford records of the time even the cost of horse-hire thence to London, namely, five shillings, of course money of the time; but when Adrian Quiney proceeded thither on public business in 1577 he had an allowance of thirty shillings. When Sadler of Stratford, a member of a family very intimate with the Shakespears, instead of riding on horseback to pay his addresses to a lady in the country, as his father had desired and expected, resolved to seek his fortune in London, as the Burbages and others had done, he rode beside the carrier (as he did not know the way). On his arrival at the metropolis he sold his horse in Smithfield to furnish himself with means. Even in 1769, when the Garricks went down for the Jubilee, they left Hampton at 7 P.M. on June 18, and did not reach Stratford

till 5 P.M. on the following day, so that the means of transit had not been much accelerated in all those years.¹

That he employed a horse appears—if we are justified in drawing any definite conclusion from that mysterious work—from more than one passage in the *Sonnets*. Take the 50th:—

“How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek—my weary travel’s end—
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,
‘Thus far the miles are measur’d from thy friend.’
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know,
His rider lov’d not speed, being made from thee—”

In the next quatorzain we similarly have:—

“O, what excuse will my poor beast then find,
When swift extremity can seem but slow?
Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind;
In winged speed no motion shall I know—”

and, turning back to Sonnet 27, the writer says:—

“Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tir’d—”

which seems to bespeak the result of a journey, not on foot, but by the same medium, which is so distinctly indicated in the preceding quotations. One of the numberless cobwebs woven by the students of the *Sonnets* brings the poet before us as afflicted with lameness. It may not be too adventurous, considering the constant use of horses for travelling purposes, to ascribe the allusion to a temporary

¹ In the time of Charles II. Sir Andrew Balfour, a Scottish physician, tells us that the Rye carrier was to be found at the King’s Head, Southwark, that he charged (this was about 1668) twelve shillings a head for saddle-horses, and that it took two days to ride from London to Rye. *Letters to a Friend*, 1700, p. 7. In a printed *Table of Distances* about 1610, Rye is made to be 48 miles from London and Dover 55. But they recognized two scales of measurement, the measured and the computed mile.

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accident, of which the inconvenience was still sensible, when the particular stanza was committed to writing. A man is not usually viewed as lame, who is merely so during an interval under special circumstances. But it is curious that St. Giles has been similarly described as lame, while it is admitted to be dubious, whether he was so born, or it was an infirmity contracted by accident.

In *As You Like It*, the poet refers to the *false gallop* of verses as a piece of actual experience collected and stored up against use, and if we dared to go farther, we might be so hardy as to imagine that the treacherous step of his horse on some occasion led to a serious casualty. On the contrary, had the lameness been a natural and chronic feature, it was one which might have served the turn of Robert Greene, when he launched his diatribe in 1592, and could find nothing worse to say, than that Shakespear aspired to shew elder dramatists how their work should have been done, and in future to do it himself.

Of the two classes of allusion in the Works, those of a general and those of a particular tenor, I should be disposed to place in the latter category the snatch in *A Winter's Tale* :—

“Jog on, jog on, the footpath way—”

treating it as a reminiscence, chastened by time, of many expeditions performed in earlier life, on foot or on horseback, not necessarily to London, but from one part of the native county or region to another.

The Lucy of the *Second Part of Henry IV.* and of the *Merry Wives* is evidently the same person, though drawn in the two dramas under different impressions and aspects. This gentleman, so fortuitously celebrated, was born in 1592, and was educated at home, it seems, by Fox the martyrologist, from whom he imbibed certain puritanical tendencies. Sir Thomas spent part of the year in Warwickshire at Charlecote and part in Gloucestershire. When we first encounter him in the earlier drama, he is introduced as

in Gloucestershire. He lost his wife in 1595-6, and he himself died in 1600. Fourteen years had elapsed between his death and the generally received date of the removal of Shakespear to London to evade the consequences of his reputed transgression. I scarcely know what credence is due to the anecdote about the pasquil, and the reference in one of the plays, alike derogatory to the Lucys, but it carries on its face a strong consanguinity with the Combe *canard*. The coat was not peculiar to Lucy; it was also borne by the Percys. The Shakespear Lucy appeared to have been tolerably regular in his attendance on the Bench, and to have been hospitably entertained by the Corporation of Stratford just about 1586. He interested himself in local affairs, as a perusal of the Borough records suffices to establish. Judging from an entry under 1580-1, the Corporation occasionally received a buck as a compliment from Charlecote, and paid the keeper of the park a gratuity of five shillings for bringing it.

In *Henry IV.* the delineation of the character of Shallow leaves on the mind the impression of a slightly eccentric, yet genial country squire of at least average parts. This piece is supposed to have been exhibited in 1597-8, during the life of Lucy; and it is surely a transfer to the boards and paper, which neither the Knight himself (for he had worn spurs since 1565-6) nor his friends could have failed to identify. But there is not the contemptuous reference to the family coat of arms, which appears in the *Merry Wives*, when Lucy was no more. At the same time, the personal traits of Shallow are reproduced by the latter, where we again meet with his trick of iteration, and in his pleasant natural vein he says to Page:—

“For though we be justices and doctors,
And Churchmen, yet we are I
The sons of women, Master Page.”

For those who are inclined (as I am) to challenge the theory that Shakespear was driven from his home by the

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agency of Lucy, there are the considerations that John Shakespear himself had a bent toward the stage, and in his official capacity favoured the players, who visited the Borough, that the young Stratfordian had then already acquired some relish and capacity for theatrical exhibitions on a humble scale among his fellows, as well as from the companies which visited the neighbourhood, and that, as I have tried for the first time to establish, he went up to the Metropolis in or about 1586, not friendless, but on the contrary, with a reasonable expectation of sympathy and support. I am simply dealing with the original motive for settlement in London, which experienced farther developments—took a turn and shape perhaps scarcely anticipated by the adventurer. There is also the collateral possibility, if it is nothing more, that the abandonment of Stratford, and of the prospect of continuing his father's employments, arose, not from any transient motive, such as the Lucy tradition, but from a crisis in the parental affairs, which rendered some new departure urgent.

The deer-stealing business,¹ whether it occurred or not, and whether, being a fact, it came under the magisterial cognizance of Lucy, could not have exerted a paramount influence over the career of Shakespear. The sitter for the portrait of Shallow, at so considerable a distance of time from the momentous crisis in the poet's life, is not depicted with such marked severity as the puritan faction in *Twelfth Night*, which is the more remarkable, looking at Sir Thomas Lucy's religious views. Landowners and game-preservers, and those who own no land and have no game to preserve, have been immemorially on opposite sides. But at the same time it is instructive and even amusing to note the way in which the great mind became a storehouse for every

¹ Poaching of various kinds was naturally a very ancient, favourite, and widely diffused pursuit and offence. Dr. Simon Forman in his *Autobiography* speaks of it as one of the recreations of his youth, and couples it with dancing-schools, wooing of wenches, and hunting the hare, almost as if the last were in a different category from deer and rabbit stealing.

sort of serviceable material, even the most trivial, laid up against the opportunity for use, as where, in the earlier part of the *Merry Wives*, in the scene between Shallow and Falstaff; the poet recollects something which, by more than possibility, had occurred years before to himself down in Warwickshire:—

"*Shallow*: Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broken open my lodge.

"*Falstaff*: But not kissed your keeper's daughter."

It is not, perhaps, quite irrelevant to the Lucy episode, let the precise circumstances have been what they may, to invite attention to the general aspect of the offence ascribed to the poet in trespassing on preserves of any kind with a felonious intent; more especially as modified legislation on this subject does not seem to have commenced very long before his time. The 17th chapter of the Act 3 and 4 Edward VI. (1549) first expressly deals with unlawful hunting in any park, forest, chase, or other enclosed ground. This statute was to a certain extent declaratory of earlier ones, but with some relaxation. The consequences to Shakespear, assuming the tradition to be well founded, would have been far graver than may be generally supposed, however, as many of the drastic provisions of the ancient Charter of the Forest yet remained in full force. It does not appear to have been till 7 James I., 1610, that pecuniary penalties were substituted.

An introduction to a more rational appreciation of Shakespear's life in London, when he finally relinquished Stratford as a home, and denied himself the sight of a young wife and three children of tender age, to enter on a meteoric course of thirty years unparalleled in human history, is a study of the poet's London, a consideration of what London was in 1587, of what its institutions were, and what its topographical costume was. Much of this sort of learning is to be gathered from Stow, Harrison's *Description of England*, and other works of reference. But the early

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training of the young Warwickshire settler was primarily rural. He was at home in all the amusements and pursuits of the country, and his experience was not to be thrown away. He utilised his familiarity with horses in his first published literary essay—*Venus and Adonis*; but it was a class of acquirement, which was mainly calculated for subsidiary purposes or incidental illustration. Upon this young man was laid the obligation of proving that he had within him resources to which the hoards of provincial lore would stand in the relation of secondary accessories.

CHAPTER II

The Burbages and Richard Tarlton—Shakespeare the servant of James Burbage—Shoreditch, Smithfield, and Rochester—Robin Ostler presumed to have been Shakespeare's predecessor under Burbage—Richard Tarlton the Yorick of *Hamlet*—The poet's childish and later knowledge of him—Other settlers from Stratford in London—His career as an actor—Burbage the actor—His intimacy with the poet.

1586-92

THE period between 1574 and 1586 had been one of fertile intellectual incubation, when cognizance was consciously or otherwise in steady course of being taken of whatever and whomever fell in his way, just as the interval from 1586 to 1596, was one, when his experience was preparing to mature and fructify in an opulence of ideas and a happiness of diction, which we have still some difficulty in surpassing!

I urge the premises that he already in 1587 knew not only the Stratford Burbages—a matter almost of course—but Richard Tarlton. James Burbage, who was of a Stratford stock, and therefore the more likely to feel an interest in Shakespeare as a beginner, had presumably quitted his native town, where we find John Burbage a burgess as early as 1555, and a contemporary of the poet's father, to try his fortune in the metropolis; James, who was destined, unconsciously, as it were, to exercise a most potential influence on the fortunes of his young countryman, had originally been a joiner, as then understood; but he became a tavern-keeper as well as a theatrical proprietor. In other words he was, in fact, what was recognized as a *hosteler*. Anyone wishful to learn the precise rank and functions of this large body of traders can do so by reference to the account in print of the Gilds

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of London.¹ The hosteler of the Elizabethan era was the landlord, possibly the owner, of a place of public entertainment, and parallel to the modern hotel-keeper; and it was his practice to delegate to an assistant the superintendence of the stables and hayloft, which formed, as they often at present do, an independent department. In days when posting was the sole and universal method of locomotion by land, the hosteler was therefore a far from unimportant personage, and the elder Burbage added to his income not inconsiderably from this collateral source. Few things could be more natural than the resort of Shakespear on his arrival in London to Burbage, or than the willingness of the latter to avail himself of the services of the son of a Stratford neighbour who was able to prove his practical efficiency for taking over duties scarcely less onerous and responsible than those of the master. On this ground, and in such an employment—a highly respectable one, demanding very special knowledge—the process of serious professional study commenced, and a thoroughly new class of experiences was thrown open to Shakespear, comprising the run of his employer's theatre at vacant intervals. The purchase and sale of horses were among his occupations, and Smithfield was not very distant from Shoreditch. He must have frequently trodden or ridden the intermediate distance, and made himself conversant with Smithfield bargains and Smithfield sharpers.

There is more than offers itself on the surface in the transfer of himself to the metropolis. About this time there appears to have arisen not merely at Stratford, but throughout the provinces, among a few more energetic and ambitious spirits a yearning for a wider scope and enlarged opportunities, and we accordingly find, if we turn over the leaves of a biographical dictionary, that a notable proportion of distinguished names are the names, not of Londoners, but of men from almost every rural district in England. The countryside was already beginning to overflow; the

¹ Hazlitt's *Livery Companies of London*, 1892, pp. 117-20.

establishment of schools, the freer diffusion of literature, and the greater facilities for intercourse at a distance, were assisting to make a new era in the relations between London and the provinces.

It is more than slightly important to recollect that in coming up to London Shakespear is not ascertained to have had any plan before him, or to have formed a definite conception of after-realised contingencies. There were exceedingly few passages in his life from first adolescence, which did not fructify in his plays and sonnets in some way or degree; and the experiences in Shoreditch seem to have been recollected, when he held his pen in his hand, writing the *First Part of Henry IV.*, where, in the first scene of the second act, there is that dialogue in the inn-yard at Rochester between the carriers, the ostler, Gadshill, and others. It is precisely on the lines of what must have been matter of daily discourse within the hearing of the young Warwickshire beginner, while he had to be content with secondary employment; and the feature of making such a house the haunt of footpads, who thus gained intelligence, as we perceive in the text, of travellers on the road with money or valuables, was not only true enough at that date, but continued to be so down to our own time. The incidence rendered all the environs of London itself unsafe after dark; and probably what was true of Rochester was once and long just as much so of Shoreditch. In this particular instance, however, the dramatist might have well had in his recent recollection the aspect of an inn at Rochester itself, since he in 1597, not so long before the play was written, accompanied his fellows in a professional tour in Kent and Sussex, subsequently crossing the country and passing into Somersetshire, the special destination being Bristol, where the travelling companies were generally able to rely on drawing good houses. Seaport towns were much cultivated on such an account. We find Tarlton at an anterior date taking in his tours at different times Bristol, Southampton, and Sandwich, and on this occasion Shake-

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spear's troop gave a performance at Dover; while he may well have seen Gad's Hill, Rochester, and the Cliffs of Dover, which have one and all contributed to illustrate his dramas; and in the neighbourhood of Dover he, perhaps, watched a samphire-gatherer, half-way down the steep cliff, pursuing his "dreadful trade" (*Lear*, Act iv. Scene 6). It is quite pertinent to the scene to bear in mind that, three hundred years ago, that which we have christened *Shakespear's Cliff* was much more perfect and much more precipitous than at present. It has since enormously suffered from erosion.

A glance at the place in Shakespear will satisfy any one that he uses the term *ostler* incidentally in a vague sort of way, and makes Prince Hal ask Falstaff if he takes him for one, when he proposes that he should assist the Knight to mount. But there can be no question as to the difference in rank between the Shakespearean hosteler or ostler and the more modern ostler or stable-man; and a confirmation of such a view lies in the remark of one of the carriers: "This house is turned upside down, since Robin Ostler died." Still more curiously, Robin, on whom the management of the baiting is here described as having depended, was the servant of James Burbage, whose place I apprehend that the poet was appointed to supply. So we have in the scene before us an actual leaf of Shakespearean biography. The ostler of the play was a responsible officer, whose death had occasioned a disturbance of the arrangements connected with the stables; and the poet stood on the ground, which it had once been his own fortune to occupy.

Ostler was recognized as a proper name—one derived from the office in the Elizabethan times, and there was a distinguished actor in Shakespear's day, William Ostler, who sustained important parts in contemporary plays, and who is characterized in Davies's *Scourge of Folly* as the Roscius of his time. Is it possible that he was related to Robin Ostler, for he survived till 1623? A John Ostler was buried at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, in 1574. It is

yet the practice in some parts of the country to refer to persons in trade in this way, and so the vocation in course of time became the patronymic.

Shakespear, again, recollected the sharpers of Smithfield, when he penned the well-known dialogue between Falstaff and Page in the *Second Part of Henry IV.* as to the whereabouts of Bardolph; and I have surmised his acquaintance with Mile-end Green and some doings there in 1587-8. Robson, in his *Choice of Change*, 1585, before the poet set foot in London as a permanence, had already warned his readers against Smithfield as a mart for horse-flesh; but perhaps the country-bred representative of Burbage was equal to most occasions. In A Decree of Star Chamber touching various matters of municipal government in 1633, the Innkeeper and Ostler are more than once cited as co-ordinate functionaries or as identical.

The dual calling of James Burbage serves us rather materially in two ways, for while it discloses the facilities which his auxiliary enjoyed for seeing the theatre, observing the machinery and costume of the stage, and forming the acquaintance of the actors, playwrights, and more or less habitual visitors, it equally disposes of the fable about Shakespear having acted in the capacity of a linkman; for not only did the frequenters of the Shoreditch theatre, who resided at any distance, necessarily come on horseback, but, owing to the dark state of the thoroughfares, links and lanterns were indispensable to enable the spectators to reach their home even on foot, especially in the winter; and the boys who discharged this duty probably belonged to Shakespear's department at the Burbage hostelry. But that the poet himself carried a link is as seriously unlikely as that he held gentlemen's horses. The entire error arises from a fundamental misconception of the former station of the hosteler, and of the relationship to him of the controller of the stables and their appurtenances. The theory as to the arrangement between Burbage and Shakespear rests on the already existing acquaintance of the two Warwickshire

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neighbours, on the clear tradition that the latter discharged certain functions belonging to an inn in the first instance, and on the peculiar circumstance that Burbage united in his own person the hosteler and the theatrical proprietor. The very wide distance between the ancient hosteler and the modern ostler seems to have demanded an extraordinarily long time for its appreciation and (in this case) its moral.

The identity of Tarlton the actor with the Yorick of *Hamlet* was surmised by the present writer more than forty years since, and more than once mentioned by him incidentally in print. Let me first transcribe the passage from the play, premising that, where it refers to the comedian "setting the table on a roar," we get exactly what in *Tarlton's Jest*s is said of his electrical influence on the spectators, if merely his face appeared at the wings, like Edward Wright in modern days at the old Adelphi:—

"1 Clo. : Here's a skull now ; this skull has lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

"Ham. : Whose was it ?

"1 Clo. : A whoreson mad fellow's it was ; whose do you think it was ?

"Ham. : Nay, I know not.

"1 Clo. : A pestilence on him for a mad rogue ! a'poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir—this same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

"Ham. : This ?

"Clo. : E'en that.

"Ham. : Let me see [it.] Alas ! poor Yorick ! I knew him, Horatio—a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy ; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ; and now how abhorred my imagination is ! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar?—"

Now, it is not only the perfect conformity of the characteristics of Yorick with those of Tarlton, which merits attention, the single word *table* being read *theatre* ; this valuable passage sheds, unless I err, a most important light on the biography of Shakespear. Let us consider. Tarlton

died in 1588; in that year the dramatist was a man of five-and-twenty. Does it seem reasonable to suppose that either Yorick or anyone else would carry such an one on his back, or continually kiss him? What is the deduction? Surely there can be only one—namely, that, when Shakespear came up to London about 1587 to seek his fortune, he did not come for the first time, and he came to a place, where he was known, and had friends, and where a man like Tarlton might have played the prank described in the play with one so much his junior—Tarlton, who did not spare far older and greater folks. If this piece of testimony be worth anything, he had no occasion to hold horses and links, or run errands. An ordinary lad, in one of the old jest books, is made to reply to a person begging him to hold his horse, that, if it needs only one to do so, he can attend to the matter himself, as if this sort of employment was not much relished. Once more, in the same play, the dramatist makes the death of Yorick take place three-and-twenty years before; Tarlton had been thirteen in the grave, when *Hamlet* was in course of composition; but was this discrepancy more than poetical licence? In 1587, then, Shakespear was already five-and-twenty, and Marlowe died at twenty-nine. I conceive myself perfectly justified in inferring that the original introduction of the poet to London took place about 1574, when he was a boy of ten, but between that date and 1586-7 there is the fullest likelihood that he repeated his visit, as I have suggested, under temporary stress arising out of some possible frolic at Charlecote.

It would be exceedingly interesting and important to ascertain, if in the *Hamlet*, which is construably indicated by Nash in the Preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, 1589, the passage about Yorick already occurred. In 1602-3, when the earliest text known to us of the Shakespear play was committed to type, the death of Tarlton had happened fourteen or fifteen years. But in 1589 it was a quite recent occurrence. Yet 1589 is our earliest point of time fixable

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for the existence of a drama on the subject of Hamlet—a drama, which had ostensibly attracted a good deal of notice. Tarlton having died in the autumn of 1588, such an allusion to him as presents itself in the play would be graceful, timely, and clear; and the terms, as they have come down to us, strike us as being perfectly Shakespearean. Is it permissible to conclude, in the absence of fuller proof, that the first *Hamlet* belongs to the interval between September, 1588, and the publication of *Menaphon*? In the first cast of the drama, which he was not too young to have composed, he might have recalled an incident of his boyhood—of earlier visits to London.

Having, as is generally believed and admitted, then, taken employment of a provisional, yet by no means derogatory, class in 1587, and in 1592 having attained sufficient note to awaken the hostile animadversions of a dramatist of such standing and repute as Robert Greene, it is an almost peremptory inference that Shakespear did not long continue in the exercise of such mechanical duties as were involved in the superintendence of the Burbage mews. Anyhow, in less than five years from his arrival on horseback in Shoreditch, Shakespear had manifestly risen to an enviable rank as a playwright, or at least as a corrector of other men's MSS. It was wonderfully rapid progress, and denotes a faculty which bore down all opposition and detraction.

Edward Alleyn is our authority for believing that in 1596 Shakespear had quarters near the Bear Garden in Southwark. It was in this year that his old friend Burbage built the Blackfriars Theatre, and involved himself in financial embarrassments of long duration, and the neighbourhood of the Bear Garden on the opposite side of the river might have proved fairly convenient. All this neighbourhood was then pleasantly open, with rural surroundings reminiscent of home. But a person of the poet's names, but not the poet, was assessed in 1598 in the parish of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate.

The antecedent vocation of Burbage as a master-joiner qualified him to undertake, according to the practice of those days,¹ an appreciable portion of the skilled labour connected with the structure of a building; he did not personally execute the joiner's work; but he was in a position to direct it, not improbably retaining his membership of the Joiners' Guild, and was perhaps induced by his experience to embark in the new enterprize. He even appears to have built certain houses adjacent to the playhouse; and these and the hostelry and stables, also contiguous, were presumably planned under his eye. In such matters we have always to allow for the difference between the Elizabethan craftsman and his modern namesake.

The Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch, where Shakespear undoubtedly started on his great career, dated from 1576: that is to say, it had been ten years or thereabout in existence when the Stratford adventurer arrived in London to seek a livelihood. It was specifically known as the *Theatre*, being the earliest regular edifice of the kind seen in London. During his entire professional life he remained steadfast to the Burbages, and when James Burbage died in 1597, he associated himself with the sons, particularly Richard, the foremost actor of his day, and the poet's life-long friend; and in 1598-9, as a climax to a dispute respecting the lease of the Shoreditch property, part of the materials was transported to the Bankside by Richard and Cuthbert Burbage for utilization in their new venture, which became known as the Globe, and was the scene of most of Shakespear's later achievements as a maker of plays and an actor in them. The transfer of portions of the actual Shoreditch house elsewhere again points to the technical training of the Burbages.

Alone in London, a husband and a father, without the consolation and stimulus, which the sympathy of the home

¹ Hazlitt's *Livery Companies*, 1892, p. 545. Stephen Harrison, designer of the *Arches of Triumph* erected to celebrate the passage of James I. through London in 1604, is described as a Joiner and Architect.

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yields: among those who were inadequately sensible or immoderately jealous of his rising fame and earnings: Shakespear, beyond a question, must have experienced fits of despondency, which he suffered to find reflection in those Sonnets, with which he began to beguile his leisure moments about the same period, which witnessed the issue of the two volumes of verse in 1593 and 1594. It lends something to his ancestral pretensions, that, whatever success might attend his career as a professional performer in any piece accepted by his theatre, he had at first, at any rate, an instinctive repugnance to the call; and such a prejudice was more likely to exist, so long as his practical experience disqualified him from filling prominent parts. The distaste lessened, perhaps, in the exact ratio of the decreasing need for any work of the kind; and when the sonnets, bewailing his lot, appeared in 1609, they had survived their original significance as a more or less sincere profession at least fifteen years.

How long it was, before Shakespear attained any sort of competence and self-possession as a performer, and the exact estimation of him in that capacity, our knowledge is limited to two or three casual anecdotes, which do not point to the display of first-rate powers in this direction. Nor do we learn, when the commencement of the attempt to fill parts in his own and other men's plays occurred. The twenty-third sonnet opens with a simile borrowed, perhaps, from painful recollection:—

“As an imperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put beside his part—”

And the 110th is redolent of discontent at having derogated from his social position by adopting the vocation of a player:—

“Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view—”

Which argues a regular, if not a prolonged, practical experience of the stage, which qualified success might render

additionally unwelcome, when there was perhaps no one, who would become so acutely sensible of any grave disparity between himself and other members of the profession.

We have the contemporary and respectable authority of Henry Chettle for the view, that the dramatist was "excellent in the quality he professed." In 1603, however, Davies of Hereford, in his *Microcosmus*, and in 1605 in his *Humour's Heaven on Earth*, brackets him with the younger Burbage as one of the best at that time; the same fluent scribbler speaks of him about 1611 in his *Scourge of Folly* as having played kingly parts; he addresses him as "good Will," as if they were tolerably intimate; and Davies does not name or indicate Alleyn, although the latter had supported the principal part in Marlowe's *Faustus* on the stage; and it is a certainty that Shakespear took the part of Knowell in Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, his name occupying the first place in the list of *Dramatis Personæ*, and of Sejanus in Jonson's drama of that name, produced in 1603.¹ In 1605 he may be fairly presumed to have been cast for one of the parts at least in the special performance of *Love's Labor's Lost* at Southampton House. Aubrey informs us that Gilbert Shakespear referred in later life to having seen the dramatist play the part of Adam in *As You Like It*, and he states that the poet's last surviving brother often visited London, and that the anecdote was repeated by him, when he was an old man. But Gilbert could scarcely have been fifty, when he died prior to 1616.

In *Hamlet*, iii. 2, the Prince refers to Polonius as having played once in the University, to which the latter replies in the affirmative, and adds that he was accounted a good actor. The title-page of the *Hamlet* of 1603 informs us that the play had then been exhibited at both

¹ It is thought, that the performance, as we possess it, omits certain political allusions, although others still remain. Jonson was summoned before the Council for the matter at the instance of Lord Northampton. It seems to have been a case similar to that of *Eastward Ho*.

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the Universities, which may serve to indicate that the author was at Oxford and Cambridge anterior to that year, and very probably puts Polonius in his own room in speaking of having appeared at Oxford, at all events, even prior to the presentation of *Hamlet* on any stage. This, if the dramatist has made Polonius his mouthpiece, is new ground, as we are not otherwise aware that he filled parts at either of the Universities at so early a date. But the surviving or available evidence tends to the impression, that Shakespear seldom aspired to a leading rank in the cast.

The cardinal point, however, on which Shakespear insisted, and in respect to which, outside his private concerns, he has shown himself willing to depart from that strange neutral or passive attitude toward his undoubted rights and interests, centred in his position as a part-proprietor; and here accordingly we find his name more than once in a list of memorialists to the authorities for indulgence or redress.

The theory that 1586-7 mark the final, not first, visit, and any deductions formed from it, do not rest exclusively on the assumed identity of Tarlton with Yorick, but derive a considerable accession of support from the suspicious brevity of the interval left under the usually credited circumstances to enable a financially resourceless settler in London, however capable and fortunate, to lift himself in less than five years to an eminence, rendering him an object of envy and animosity to playwrights of long and high standing. For 1592 must be regarded, not as the date when Shakespear had established a reputation, but that when the resentment of Greene at length vented itself in print; and the plea for 1574 would be yet stronger if the hand of the poet in the *Hamlet* of 1588-9 were by any means traceable. But Mr. Fleay gives the play noticed by Nash in 1589, without doubt or reserve, to Kyd. No eye, I think, has so far beheld it in more than two or three accidental fragments.

CHAPTER III

Conjugal relations—Shakespear alone in London—Profound attachment to his birthplace—Other emigrants from Stratford to London—New Place—Spenser's estimate of Shakespear in his *Colin Clout*, written in 1591.

1592-97

It strikes us all as a most signally remarkable circumstance, that a young couple with a family beginning to grow up round them, within three or four years of their union, should agree to part, not while the husband and father left his home for some special reason in search of employment elsewhere, but virtually for ever; for it is in the last degree questionable, whether Shakespear, in his visits to Warwickshire at intervals between 1587 and 1611 or thereabout, saw his wife or at all events slept under the same roof subsequently to 1596; and we find the poet, even where important matters of business might have seemed to call for his presence on the spot, delegating to others the management of the details on his behalf.

There was no second example of an Elizabethan author, both during and at the close of a highly successful career, returning to his own county and natal place—in fact dividing his time after a certain period of life between London and the country. The case of Samuel Daniel was essentially different.

But there was an infinitely earlier instance of a man, who eventually won a high rank as a playwright, and who, after certain youthful vicissitudes, hired himself to a theatre, where he assisted in the mechanical department—worked in fact as an artizan; and it was that of Plautus, who unquestionably thus acquired, as Shakespear did, a knowledge of

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the wants of the stage and the taste of audiences. The English master unconsciously trod in the footsteps of his Roman prototype, some of whose works were accessible to him in our vernacular, but of whose personal career he was more than possibly ignorant. A second respect, in which the two writers approached each other, was the attribution to both of works, for which they were not responsible, either from error or from a less pardonable motive.

It is greatly regrettable that there are no surer aids to following the footprints of Shakespear in his journeys on horseback or by waggon to and from the Metropolis, while he divided his time between his home at Stratford and his professional engagements in London, and more particularly in his periodical sojourns at Oxford, where he is supposed to have given a preference to the Crown Inn, then in the Cornmarket, near Carfax, as a stopping point.

There is, however, the rather weighty *caveat* to be entered in respect to these obscure movements, that some of the excursions on horseback were either not to Stratford at all, or embraced a point where a collateral attraction had arisen; and this feature in the matter is the more worthy of admittance, in illustration and proof, that it may have contributed to the matrimonial trouble which wrought such miserable consequences about 1596 to the Shakespears, and was possibly not even *ex parte*. Anyhow the wife was to be excused, if, looking at the protracted and systematic absences from home, she obeyed her womanly instinct in drawing conclusions.

In considering a man of the intellectual calibre and temperament of Shakespear, and in treating the subject as a matter of calm and dispassionate biographical record, the insignificant tales of gallantries and intrigues, which have descended to us under various auspices, hardly merit serious discussion, even if the pieces of gossip and scandal are very probably founded on fact. The poet passed the greater

part of his middle life in London amid the gaieties and temptations, from which neither he nor his fellows were humanly likely to escape without contact and notice. It was antecedent to the green-room and the women-actors, and Shakespear, Burbage, and the rest were spared the fascinations of the ballet-dancer; but there was never any deficiency of bonny damsels and complaisant hostesses in town and country. The author of *Venus and Adonis*, who, we should not forget, lived so long and so constantly, as we should now colloquially say, *en garçon*, was what the goddess of Love would, according to him, have desired the object of her passion to be. Who shall say that he never proved a Tarquin to some unchronicled Lucrece? There is even a good deal of verisimilitude in the story of his forestalment of his early friend Burbage the actor in some assignation, preserved by Manningham the Diarist. It was the opulent and voluptuous property of his blood—a perpetual spring of warm and deep emotions—which accomplished for us all the nobler and purer things that we so cherish, yet that was chargeable, too, as in the case of even a greater master, Sophocles, with certain infirmities of our strange composite nature. Greatness and its foil spring from one germ.

It has been thought possible that Shakespear, in picturing the remarkable change (according to the received idea) in Henry V. on his accession to the crown, had a side-look to his own emergence from an adventurous and obscure career into all that was noble and glorious: into something which partook indeed of the nature of its sources and surroundings while it so strangely, so vastly, and so enduringly eclipsed them all. But the reformation of the prince is more or less doubtful, nor do I know that the poet on his side had greater cause for self-reproach than most of his set. The analogy, if there be any, was limited to the almost electrifying advent from an unlooked-for quarter, from a pen first of all speculatively employed in verbal revision, of a literary power superior

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(as it would then be judged) even to that of Greene or Marlowe.

The construction of an autobiography from detached passages of the Works becomes from the straitened amount of more direct and legitimate material a venture the more pardonable. Some of the most interesting and persuasive clues are the expressions of feeling put into the mouths of such interchangeable characters as Hamlet and Jaques; for, regarding the former as historically and biographically fabulous, there is much of his philosophy, which might as fitly have been given to the other *persona*, and *vice versa*; and all these utterances are more or less cynical and astringent. Scores of them might be lifted out of their places in the text, and printed in sequence; and they would tell one story—that of a magnificent career smitten by a blight.

We can scarcely wonder, that Shakespear escaped from his incompatible domestic circumstances, even prior to a practical severance of the nuptial tie, and sought relief and distraction among associates, whose company was not very beneficial. The precise chronological place of the mad frolic, where the poet passed the night under a hedge, probably on his way home from a merry meeting, is unsettled; it recalls the very similar story of Cowley and Dean Sprat, which was attended by more serious consequences; and when we hear that Dryden latterly gave way, under the encouragement of Addison, to intemperate habits, it is not unreasonable to trace them to a private source—to connubial discord. Such episodes are of all time. We can all recall the complaints of the wife of the author of *Vaux de Vire*, and of Tennyson's Northern Farmer's disconsolate bedfellow left "ligging aloān."

It may be true that the other dramatic writers of the age, save here and there in a prefatory way, have not converted their productions in a similar manner into vehicles for covert or indirect notices of themselves. But the obvious reply is, that none of these was situated, from a worldly point of view, as Shakespear was. They were not persons

of substance and social status; there was not the singularity of a divided household, with its incidence of romance, mystery, and sorrow; and private references would have lacked the interest which they possess in an enhanced manner here, from the terms in which they are couched, and the adroit mode of introducing them.

The allodial affection, so to speak, must have been inextinguishably strong to preserve that loyalty to the Warwickshire home in the face of such meagre inducements and such niggard sympathy, for assuredly no man even of more moderate gifts was less regarded by those about him and belonging to him than this one of whom I write. Not a traditional syllable from the lips of the father or the mother (save the paternal definition of his son as a good sort of fellow), the wife or the children, significant of honour or pride; not a hint on the part of the Halls, the Quineys, or the Barnards, that their kinsman was more than such another as themselves. No audible notes of praise, nor ocular signs of admiration or gratitude in the place of birth, in stolid, drowsy Stratford, muter than sphinx, through the centuries, save when (just after the New Place purchase) it was thought that he might help his neighbours in the country at a pinch, and the indirect and inaccurate notice, through one of the two brothers, who knew London, of his performance in one of his own plays; once, only once, waking from an eternal lethargy, and lifting its voice by one of its own offspring, to utter winged words hearable by all men for time everlasting.

Where the scene of his triumphs lay, in even then cosmopolitan London, it was that he mingled with those, who were capable of appreciating his power and of realizing the advent of a new master and of a new epoch in dramatic literature. Greene and Marlowe were no more; he was *facile princeps*; for whatever we may think of the two dramatists just named, all in all, both had during a few years, and down to 1593, not only occupied in the public

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view a rank scarcely inferior, if at all so, to Shakespear's, but gave a promise, had they lived, of becoming and remaining far more formidable rivals than they were and are. Shakespear, on the contrary, manifestly husbanded his resources, and nursed his fortune, from the outset; and hence he was spared at any rate long enough to place at a distance all those, among and even with whom he had once worked, and to reach, as it might seem, the plenitude of his aims and intellect as a man of business—if not as a husband and a father; and here we approach within sight of the unconquerable bent of his mind—one, which recalls the fond contemplation by Warren Hastings of the English country home, which he had left behind, and to which his ultimate return after a grand Indian career was probably the happiest and proudest moment of his life.

Not his unprecedented popularity as a writer and even as an actor, not the companionship of his fellows, not the caresses of the great, not the immeasurably greater convenience and amenity of the Metropolis, sufficed to overcome the inborn provincial instinct and bias, or to wean him from that soil and atmosphere, where he first drew breath, which was everything to him, to which he was unconsciously to become everything. For him London was ever mainly the means to an end—the source of the purchase-money of a *status* and of independence. That he originally counted on such an almost life-long stay on the theatre of his exertions and successes is doubtful, inasmuch as it is doubtful, whether he could have had a full and distinct foreknowledge of the domestic complications, which went so far to neutralize and frustrate his efforts. Yet like other builders of their own fortunes, he was continually setting back the limits of his wants and his aspirations. In the person of Osric¹ in *Hamlet* he ridicules a man “spacious

¹ The name may have been, probably was, borrowed from Heywood's *Royal King and Loyal Subject*, written and acted before 1600. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, in v.

in the possession of dirt,"¹ and what became his own aims?

An individual of universal intellect, of universal acceptance, kept in his mind's eye year after year, as an abode in an old age, which he was never to attain, and a resting place for his bones, a rural village far away from the life to which in his professional character he had become seemingly wedded or at least reconciled. In Stratford he was among his own people, and had no patrons, himself a patron of others. But, looking at the other side of the question, difficulties are perceptible. The household at home was not to be transplanted to the capital with ease or with advantage; the wife and daughters had never beheld London; and down to 1601 John Shakespear, and down to 1608 his widow, were living. They were, one and all, rather impracticable. If the member of the family whom the world best knows had ever dreamed of removing permanently, like so many other adventurers, to the Metropolis, his domestic ties must have helped to dissuade him from the step, and have eventually brought about that anomalous distribution of his time and presence. Neither the rural nor the personal attractions of Stratford were calculated to be of sufficient potency to turn the scale, had there not existed collateral motives: an innate affection for the locality, with all its drawbacks, and a certain lukewarmth toward London and its literary set.

The quest of a career in London was an aim peculiar neither to Shakespear nor to Stratford, and the latter yielded to the Metropolis within a few years (besides the Burbages) an eminent printer in the person of Richard Field and a successful druggist in that of John Sadler, a

¹ In a ballad by John Heywood (*Songs from the Dramatists*, 1864, p. 29) this expression already occurs:—

"The loss of wealth is loss of dirt,
As sages in all times assert;
The happy man's without a shirt,
And never comes to maim or hurt.
Be merry, friends."

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kinsman of the Quineys, whose granddaughter, the wife of Dr. Anthony Walker, Rector of Fyfield in Essex, left an account of her early fortunes and trials.¹ Perhaps the elder Burbage gave the initiative in this migratory movement.

1586-7 has been perhaps rightly given as the date of the final arrival of Shakespear in the Metropolis, not as a visitor, but with a view to entrance on the serious business of life. It may be a question, whether a warrantable certainty that some already there, already known to him, would be in a position to lend him a helping hand at the outset was not directly instrumental in influencing the poet to sacrifice local prospects and local ties—at first perhaps as no more than a provisional arrangement. In 1597 New Place became his property. It was the most important residential site in the town, and although his father had long enjoyed a certain share of consideration as a man of business and a municipal officer, the fluctuating state of his affairs from various causes had never enabled him to assume a distinguished and substantial position among those of his own class at Stratford. The successful career of his son could not be a secret, as inhabitants of the town periodically visited London, while theatrical companies and other Londoners took Stratford at intervals in their professional or business tours. Yet from a local and domestic point of view the change in the fortunes of the Shakespears must have seemed surprizingly rapid, and must have awakened a mixed feeling cognate in some respects to that excited in the English capital by the rise of a dramatic and theatrical constellation, which threatened to eclipse all others, and to transform an obscure Warwickshire village into the most famous literary suburb of London.

In 1596 Shakespear was thirty-three. In a decade he had

¹ Hunter's *New Illustrations of Shakespear*, 1845, I. 69. Anthony Walker was probably akin to Sir Edward Walker, Garter King of Arms, whose *Historical Discourses* were published in 1705 under the auspices of Hugh Clopton, Esq., High Steward of Stratford-on-Avon, occupier of New Place, and afterward knighted.

more than laid the foundations of his fortune. He had yet to crown the edifice of his literary fame by the successive production of his masterpieces. But it was marvellously swift progress, an unique record. Was it not the happy union of genius and professional aptitude, which accounted for such a result? Peculiar circumstances conferred on him as a writer the immense advantage of completing and extending in London the practical education of which the groundwork and rural side had been gained at home. It was no small matter, after mastering the whole costume of English provincial life, for such an one to have had the opportunity, so to speak, forced upon him of spending the best part of his career within reach of all that the metropolis of England possessed of knowledge, learning, and culture.

Unquestioned facts, not only in regard to the significant jealousy of fellow-playwrights, but to the possession in 1597 of the means of acquiring New Place for £60,¹ and having the credit of being able to find £30 more for another purpose almost concurrently (a total in modern money of about £700), oblige us to accept for granted that between, let us say, 1590 and the later date Shakespear was incessantly at work on dramatic composition and recension of a more or less highly remunerative character; for the Sonnets and other lyrics can be scarcely supposed to have brought much more than literary celebrity. It was in these years that he laid the foundation of fame and fortune, and there is, subject to the proviso that he is *Ætïon*, a rather weighty testimony to his approach to eminence and fame in the reference of Spenser to him in 1596 in his *Colin Clout* after that protracted visit to England and ample opportunities of acquainting himself with the literary life of London. Spenser introduces *Ætïon* almost as an afterthought in his recital of some of the writers of his time, although Alabaster he mentions by name, and although *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* were both before the world. The already cele-

¹ The deeds, however, were not transferred till 1602.

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brated author of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, *Faëry Queen* and other works, probably judged that he was awarding an adequate meed to the young man, who had begun to make a stir by altering and, as some thought, improving other folks', his seniors', performances. Whatever he might have achieved, he had yet a name to make. Spenser did not guess how great an one it would be, how far greater an one, as time advanced, it would grow—how far greater even than his own. He thought more highly of Daniel. Yet Shakespear had given nothing thus far to the theatres beyond the amended and developed work of others; some of the historical series in their second state, previously to their final completion, as we read them in the first folio, and certain other pieces of editorship, including *Titus Andronicus*, which was a most popular performance, and continued to hold the stage down to the time of James I. Christopher Marlowe had died in the summer of 1593; it is more likely to have been an unfinished production of his unequal pen than of Kyd. Mr. Fleay seems to think that it is Kyd's, except the second scene of the third act, which Shakespear possibly added. It was sent to the press in 1594. But I crave leave, in the face of elaborate efforts to claim the authorship of certain anonymous plays for a given individual, to suggest that among a pre-Shakespearean circle there prevailed a rough similarity of style and treatment, which renders confident attribution dangerous and futile.

The pen and mind of Shakespear must have been intent on an unbroken succession of kindred ventures, all converging to a single issue—the attainment of worldly independence, while each approached a step nearer to those masterpieces, which have so dwarfed their predecessors, and reduced them in our appreciation to material for filling up a biographical void, which, when Shakespear had left behind him his initial functions at the Burbage hostelry, whatever they may have precisely been, is not susceptible of explanation in any manner conducive to the accumulation of estate,

not even by presuming his engagement in the *Sonnets*, which did not probably commence till 1594, or in the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, which, as we know, were not undertaken much before that date.

In the *Return from Parnassus*, a drama, of which the composition is referred to the winter of 1601, when our poet had almost reached the height of his professional and financial eminence, there is a reference by *Studioso*, one of the characters, to adventurers,

“that carried erst their fardles on their backs,—”

who ride on horseback through the streets with pages to attend their masterpieces, and the speaker is made to add :

“They purchase lands, and now esquires are made—”

Some have thought that Shakespear was here indicated. It seems to me, I confess, more likely that the author had Edward Alleyn in view, although Alleyn, the son of a London innholder, was probably never a needy man. In 1601 he had probably acquired property, and in Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, published in that year, one of the characters, Sir Edward Fortune, has been taken to point to him. Mr. Fleay even thinks that Alleyn was then building the Fortune theatre. The description in the *Return from Parnassus* would certainly not suit Shakespear. He is nowhere described as an esquire. He never proceeds beyond Master and *Generous*, and the latter was broadly distinguished from *Armiger*.

A second illustration, which strikes one as less fanciful and exaggerated, presents itself, however, in a nearly contemporary publication, where the writer chafes at the purchase of lands by “adulterous plays,” and this allusion might well apply to Shakespear, since in the May of 1602, just before the appearance of the volume in question,¹ he had bought from the Combes 107 acres, his largest

¹ *Vertues Commonwealth*, by Henry Crosse, 1603.

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acquisition in real property. The estimate of the dramas by the author may not be very weighty, for he announces himself to be a beginner. It was a piece of novel intelligence, which he had picked up, which was a matter of current gossip.

CHAPTER IV

Recovery of the Shakespears' fortunes—The poet as a profit-sharer—Application of John Shakespear for a grant of arms—Failure to regain the maternal estate of Asbies—Death of Hamnet Shakespear—Presumed separation of Shakespear and his wife—The Blackfriars' property—The poet and the Earl of Rutland—His declining health—Occupancy of New Place—Litigation and other troubles—Visit of Jonson and Drayton to Stratford—Last days and death of the poet.

1597-1616

THE worldly prosperity of Shakespear, when it gave the earliest promise of fulfilment, became attributable to his dual position as a playwright and a profit-sharer in the house or houses, where his works were presented. In 1592 he had become an object of envy and satire, which told their own tale, and at which he could afford to smile; in 1597 he was the owner of New Place and a man of recognized substance. The gardens, orchards, and stables, recited in a document of later date can surely refer only to this part of the Shakespear estate. When it was noised abroad, that Master William Shakespear, poet and playwright, had become the successor of the Cloptons and others in the Great House, what a sensation there must have been in Stratford, where the family, not so long since, when the father failed, and some of the Arden inheritance was alienated, seemed as if it was likely to suffer a decline, if not an eclipse, and now, in Master Shakespear Senior's own lifetime, this wondrous change! Setting on one side the published poems and the unpublished sonnets, which did not perhaps altogether yield much, his editorial and professional labours during ten years (1587-97) were not only lucrative, though involving considerable attention to technical and mechanical details, but prepared the way for

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the success of those more important and original efforts, which were to mark and cover the remainder of his active career, and which render his personality what we see it to-day. Under the auspices of the elder Burbage his practical training in Shoreditch yielded a man of his observant temper an invaluable insight into the requirements and humours of audiences, and enabled him, to a far larger extent than other contemporary dramatic authors, to accommodate his treatment of themes, as far as possible, to his clients; there were cases, no doubt, where he hesitated to raise the standard of his work too abruptly, and had to consider the prejudices of the playgoer in favour of the older school. In estimating his conduct, it is always to be recollected, that he was primarily a maker of plays, secondly an actor in them, thirdly (and concurrently) a part-proprietor, and, last of all, a poet in the sense that Daniel, Drayton, and others were poets, or, in other words, the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, the *Sonnets*, and a few other miscellaneous lyrics of medium quality. We collect from a passage in Bishop Earle's *Microcosmography*, probably written about 1626, that it was by no means an uncommon practice for performers to take their earnings according to the receipts; but the proportion necessarily depended on personal eminence or popularity.

The years 1596-9 were more than usually eventful. They witnessed the appearance on the stage of his earliest original or independent work: a two years' suit against the Lamberts for the recovery of the maternal estate of Asbies: a project for obtaining from Heralds' College a grant of arms: the death, not only of his son and the loss of all immediate prospect of a direct succession to any property, but of that valuable old friend James Burbage: the purchase of New Place: and the theatrical tour in some of the southern counties of England, and in Somersetshire, which supplied perhaps a welcome distraction from domestic mishaps.

The Warwickshire Shakespeares appear to have been almost without an exception agriculturists. They were

somewhat prone to litigation; and one of them, a Thomas of 1575, is represented as "a common forestaller and engrosser of barley, wheat and rye contrary to the statute, and an evil example of other subjects." This is a sort of sidelight for our use and consideration, when we look at the practical aspect of the character of the poet's father, a Snitterfield man, transmitted to that son, in whose absence such anecdotes would have had no permanent significance. There are those other bearings on the individual here most immediately concerned, that his traditional Snitterfield associations visibly influenced him in two different ways: when he became an investor, in putting his money into land and tithes, and in modelling certain features in his handwriting, so far as we can test it from his signature. Extant specimens shew the family likeness in the form of some of the letters of the name, and I elsewhere point out that the type of handwriting was common to persons of education at a much later date. We hear adverse criticism on the calligraphy of the poet; but his style strikes one as an advance on that of his predecessors. It was, however, a clear evolution from it; and in his last efforts to transfer his name to paper we detect a relapse from physical weakness to the paternal model. The Shakespears sprang on the maternal side from the yeomanry, and had had originally among them at Snitterfield and the vicinity a good estate in land.

John Shakespear not improbably imbibed through his wife certain gentilitious instincts, which, had his personal fortunes continued to be prosperous, might have prompted him, independently of his son, to solicit coat-armour. But the signal success of his son and the contemplated treaty for an important residential property in their native place and neighbourhood, coupled with reputed facilities for obtaining the distinction, encouraged the Shakespears, even before New Place had become theirs, yet when its acquisition was in view, to apply for an official cognizance. Characteristically the poet himself nowhere appears in the matter; the negotiation was in his father's name; he was arguably neutral

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on such a subject; but in 1596 and 1599 the heralds (Dethick and Camden) drafted grants to John Shakespear, and based their action on the alleged services of ancestors to Henry VII. Nothing definite was ever accomplished, and it was then, as it yet is, the prevailing view, that these historical pretensions, which could hardly have been otherwise derived, if they existed at all, than from the earlier Ardens, were unfounded. I acquit Shakespear of having advanced them, and of greatly caring which way the case ended; but the authorities, who lent their countenance to this and quite a number of similar applications, did not escape censure from one of their own body (York Herald), who in no measured terms condemned the growing tendency to find heraldic honours for a crowd of aspirants, especially where a mere dramatic writer and performer on the stage (as these gentlemen might have put it) was in question. My own feeling is that the mother—a woman of a certain personality and of separate estate—took the initiative, and prevailed on their son to defray the preliminary charges.

There is more than one copy of Brooke's List of Arms granted by Dethick and others, as York Herald judged improperly, and the coat proposed for the Shakespears has beneath it, in a transcript, probably by Peter le Neve: Arms of Shakespear *the Player*, Brooke ignoring not only the dramatist, but the landed proprietor and master of New Place, and a poet, whom noble personages had recognized and befriended. The motto was to be *Non sans Droict*. There was a surprizing degree of unprofessional levity, combined with ignorance or greed, on the part of some of the staff at Heralds' College. As late as 1617 York Herald forwarded to Garter King of Arms a coat for Gregory Brandon (the hangman), whom he described as a merchant of London of good family, and both Brooke and Dethick were committed to the Marshalsea for the misdemeanour and contempt.

A question, which more nearly touched him, and which illustrated the less commercial—almost sentimental—side of his nature was one, which was equally productive of trouble

and outlay, and equally destitute of result. In 1597 two successive bills were filed in Chancery by John and Mary Shakespear, and by John Shakespear individually, for the purpose of recovering the estate of Asbies, which had passed to their relations the Lamberts by foreclosure of mortgage; but the suit lasted two years, and seems to have been eventually abandoned by the plaintiffs, who described themselves in the pleas as persons of slender means and Lambert as a gentleman of wealth and ability. But it is more than likely that all the charges were borne, as in the other case, by the dramatist, and his action cannot be viewed as otherwise than dutiful and chivalrous. The loss of the Asbies estate evidently hurt him. Randolph the poet, who was born in 1605, and within whose circle there were many personal acquaintances of Shakespear, in his paraphrase of the *Phutus* of Aristophanes, was inclined to deny him credit for such Quixotic enthusiasm.¹ But he had a very imperfect knowledge of the circumstances and appreciation of the difficulties with which Shakespear was confronted almost throughout his life.

In 1596 the first blow to his hopes arrived in the death of his only son Hamnet, so named after one of the Sadlers of Stratford,² even before his first acquisition was more than contemplated; and it must have been about the same time, that there was an informal separation, by which the wife became dependent on some personal interest in her paternal estate. There is the choice of probabilities of mere incompatibility, of an intrigue during his frequent and long absences on the wife's side—a woman still not beyond the prime of life, of one or more on her husband's. In his 152nd Sonnet he had before him the idea of a woman's "bed-vow broke," which bespeaks the nuptial state and a

¹ Apostrophizing the god of wealth, Randolph rather foolishly says:—

"Did not Will Summers break his wind for thee,
And Shakespeare therefore write his comedy?"

² The name is found among the Haringtons in the early part of the century.—*Plumpton Correspondence*, p. 207.

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husband's, rather than a lover's, reproach; and his wife was evidently in touch with a man—formerly her father's shepherd, who had advanced her 40s., the equivalent of £10 or £12 of our money, as a loan, which the poet for some time at least repudiated. In fact, the Shakespears might in 1596 have probably renewed the male inheritance, had not cohabitation previously determined through a motive or agency, which one can only surmise. This uncomfortable view is not disproved by the later visits to Stratford and ultimate settlement of Shakespear there.

It is shown by three official documents, dated between April 26 and May 22, 1615, that proceedings in Chancery were taken to compel William Blackwell and others to surrender to Sir Thomas Bendish, Baronet, and others certain papers or documents relevant to premises, messuages, &c., which had remained at her death in the hands of the late Ann Bacon previous to her marriage into the family of Blackwell, and which it was alleged by the plaintiffs that she had only held in trust, the defendants contending that she held them in fee. The Court disposed of the case in a little over a fortnight from the delivery of the defendants' answer on May 5, and gave judgment for the plaintiffs, and ordered the papers to be brought into Chancery.

When the Bill of Complaint had been prepared, it was found that two parties' names had been overlooked, those of Mary Dormer and WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR, and they were accordingly interlined. The bearing of these fresh evidences upon the last days of the poet is extremely slight; he was evidently a subordinate factor in the suit; and all that can be said is, that in his broken state of health any additional complication was calculated to prove injurious. The whole point involved here seems to have been that the house and appurtenances bought by Shakespear in 1613 from Henry Walker abutted on the premises owned by the other plaintiffs, and that there were some peculiar easements and privileges set forth in the records detained.

We gain a casual insight into the private life of the

poet, at a time when active professional work had become less necessary and less constant, and when he had leisure to attend to incidental affairs outside the theatre. I elsewhere hazard a conjecture that in 1611 he sat to Richard Burbage for the portrait executed in that year, while he remained convalescent, and it appears that among the Belvoir Castle records there is an entry of a payment to the poet of 44s. by or on behalf of the young Earl of Rutland for arranging the details of a historic device for his house after the manner of the Italian *Imprese*, and an equal sum to Burbage for painting and making the same. The Earl had at this time a mansion at the upper end of Aldersgate Street; he was a very young man, who had just succeeded his brother in the title, and who at once emulated the prevailing taste for splendour. It happened not long after his more or less unexpected inheritance of the family honours, that London was thrown into a state of joyous and giddy ferment by the marriage of the King's only daughter Elizabeth to the Count Palatine of the Rhine, and the thought and the talk might have naturally run among the folks connected with the Court—guests at the ceremony and festivities—on such a topic as these devices. The Earl was extremely apt to feel a warm interest in the proceedings, and was, no doubt, in London, when the magnificent celebration of the union took place, and when not only *Othello* and *A Winter's Tale* were commanded as special performances, but for which occasion in the view of Tieck (to which I do not quite know how far one should subscribe) the *Tempest* was originally written.

Still of the exact circumstances, which brought the Earl of Rutland and Shakespear together, although we may surmise, we positively know nothing. But as there were numerous persons always available for the performance of such functions, it becomes a permissible supposition, that an interview had occurred or been arranged, and that the poet recommended Burbage as an individual qualified to attend to a part of the commission, he undertaking to

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be answerable for the rest. He perfectly well knew what *Imprese* were, and he had had an earlier experience of going in quest of these specialists, when his father or mother, or both, were urging him to procure coat-armour. The conclusion of the business in London explains the ostensible absence of letters on the subject at Belvoir Castle.

The identity of the amounts received by the two friends—the Earl's secretary discriminates in his accounts between Richard Burbage and *Master* Shakespear, however—may be explainable by the generous employer having taken four gold jacobuses from his pocket, and presented two to each, to cover all expenses, and well they might, for they represented about £20 of our money. These statistics less resemble the *Arabian Nights* than the childish tale of Southampton having in or about 1597 given the poet £1000 toward a purchase, which cost £60, and of which the completion spread over five years.

We seem to have no precise note of time, as regards the earliest symptoms of declining health. The general strength was impaired in 1614, as we collect from cousin Greene, and whatever convivial indiscretion there actually was in 1615-16, when Jonson and Drayton were at Stratford, operated on an already debilitated constitution. But it is scarcely safe to presume, that four years before, when the premises in St. Anne's, Blackfriars, became his, he had any presentiment that the end was so near, since he would, one imagines, have hesitated to put a substantial sum of money into a venture, where no male heir—no one at all on the spot—existed to attend to it at his death—merely female beneficiaries in a remote country town. Probably therefore even in 1612-13 his physical state afforded no ground for anxiety, and the mischief, which was to have so grave a development, had not yet betrayed itself. What it was neither Dr. Hall nor any one else has apprised us; but it was constructively some malady—possibly a combination of maladies—which had spread over at least a couple of years.

It is evident that New Place, or the Great House,¹ was at the time of acquisition in a very bad state of repair; and we shall not be far from the truth, perhaps, in surmising that no complete restoration took place in the lifetime of the poet, even if the Halls and others, who resided there after his death, accomplished much in such a direction, or did more than use the habitable rooms. A man, whose whole career had been devoted to the accumulation of property by the exercise of the superlative faculties unexpectedly revealed in him, and who had hardened himself to rough and casual modes of subsistence in London, may have well failed to appreciate or study the elegant or even genteel refinements of domestic life, and he would have eyed it as a very doubtful investment, particularly under the circumstances which we seem to be obliged to admit, to have converted a dilapidated residence into an abode suitable for a gentleman of substance and position, nay, of some sort of literary repute among those of the Court and the great city. The wonder, perhaps, should be, why he originally made the acquisition.

A perusal of the official correspondence of the precise period tends to exculpate the new owner of the Great House from exceptional neglect or disregard even from other causes than indifference of the state of his property, and it is possible to select as a sample the case of the young Earl of Southampton, who, in a letter from his lodging in the Strand, 26 June, 1592,² is found appealing to Mr. Hicks to intercede with his guardian Lord Burleigh to have his decayed manor-house of Beaulieu in Hampshire put in repair. His lordship was then in his twentieth year, and perhaps contemplated going into residence at Beaulieu on the attainment of his majority. Burleigh was Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries.

¹ This expression for a capital messuage was not peculiar to Stratford, or even to Shakespear's time, for in or about 1820 the more modern structure erected by the Coxwell-Rogers family at Dowdeswell, near Cheltenham, in place of the old Dowdeswell House, was similarly named.

² Lansdowne MS. 71, fol. 180.

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While, however, the poet might not have aspired, under changed domestic conditions, to make the mansion an abode such as it had been, and such as it subsequently became in other hands, he may be presumed to have lost no time in executing repairs absolutely essential to the maintenance of the premises, since he is reported as obtaining stone for the purpose in 1598, while, in consequence of some flaw in the conveyance, he was not yet in legal possession; and in 1602, when the title-deeds were at last delivered, he planted two apple orchards—whether on any portion of the existing garden or not, is uncertain, and subsequently—it is thought in 1609—the historical mulberry.

There is reason to believe that he went down to Stratford in 1608 to see his mother in her last moments, or at least to attend the funeral, and he was there down to the 16th October, when he stood sponsor to the child of William Walker of the Stratford family of that name, or possibly later. But whether he stayed at New Place or elsewhere, is not ascertained. Could he have put up at the house in Henley Street, which he subsequently left to his sister Joan Hart for life, and where she might have been then residing with her family, or did he become the guest of Greene, with whom there were legal points to discuss? For the Addenbroke suit was opened in the August of this year, and necessitated a visit by the cousin to London, arguably while Shakespear remained in Warwickshire.

New Place must be taken to have been more or less in the tenancy of the owner's family from 1597-8 to 1607, the date of the marriage of Susanna Shakespear. From 1608 to 1610 or 1611, Thomas Greene was the lessee. At Michaelmas, 1610, he was preparing to quit, and at Midsummer, 1611, he was domesticated elsewhere; but in 1614 a preacher, who was the guest of the corporation, was apparently lodged here, and received at the public expense a quart of sack and one of claret, which argues a two or three days' stay and the absence of the owner. The stranger is concluded to have been a puritan, of whom

the Halls were apter to be tolerant than the master of the house; but he was at any rate no enemy to good liquor. Stratford merely followed the customary practice in those days of bringing out the sack and sugar, or something of that kind, at the coming of every distinguished visitor.

Greene had paid another professional visit to London on business probably connected with the Welcombe difficulty, if not with a second question at issue, to which the poet was equally unable to attend in person, in respect to his property in Blackfriars, and he was still there on November 15, 1614; but he returned to Warwickshire on the evening of that day or next morning, and on the 17th he and Shakespear met in Stratford. There is the entry in the Diary of Greene under date of November 17, where he mentions that "my cousin Shakespear, coming yesterday to town, I went to see him, how he did." Greene plainly intended to convey that the poet was staying somewhere in the vicinity of Stratford, and that in one of his visits to the town his relative called on him to inquire after his health, which was already indifferent, and to report what had taken place in London. It may have been an appointment, as the circumstances were growing more acute. It is sufficiently well known that it is the customary parlance to this day in relation to the outskirts or suburbs of any place, to refer to the latter as "town." In the correspondence of the first Earl of Bristol the term is applied to Bury St. Edmunds—his lordship's town. Where Greene refers to London in one place, he specifically names it. He speaks of passing Whitehall, and of being in Westminster. His visit was almost certainly due, first of all, to the wish of the Stratford corporation to obtain judicial advice and assistance in bringing to a climax the business, in which Shakespear had so important a stake, and which threatened, as we hear, to involve serious local commotions.

I am more than afraid, that the last days were darkened and saddened by domestic estrangement. In what I believe

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to have been almost his latest dramatic effort, as it was the most finished one, the *Tempest*, he has bequeathed to us something like authority for the view that marital disunion and unhappiness still haunted him in 1611 or thereabout, while the Welcombe enclosure episode of 1614-15 reveals to us a state of mental susceptibility and harass for which such a circumstance does not seem *per se* answerable.

As the exact date of the ultimate withdrawal to Stratford—it was between February and June of the twelvemonth, when it occurred—is not ascertainable, we cannot be sure whether that event preceded or followed the destruction of the theatre, where so many of his plays had been presented, and where some of his papers may have perished; but in any case the catastrophe must have come as a heavy blow to long and intimate associations, and operated as a factor in unhinging his mind, and shaking his health of body.¹ That disaster must have also involved in financial loss his friends Burbage, Condell, and Hemings, even if the first named had a far smaller stake as an actor and proprietor than he had in the Blackfriars theatre.

An infinitely worse and nearer shock, however, was an action for slander in the Consistory Court at Worcester brought by John Hall on his wife's behalf, perhaps at her instigation, against John Lane, more than possibly related to Nicholas Lane, with whom John Shakespear had had a lawsuit in 1587, for defamatory words spoken by Lane concerning the alleged misconduct of Mrs. Hall with a third party, with the result, that Lane was excommunicated; and looking at Shakespear's sensitive and precarious condition the favourable judgment scarcely lessened the mortification.

The visit of Jonson and Drayton to Stratford in 1615-16 is a well-aired tale; but its latent significance and speciality of interest seem to have been overlooked; in common with the extreme probability, that the latter merely made the call in connection with his periodical excursion to Gloucester-

¹ What appears to be a view of the New Globe occurs as part of the engraved title to Jonson's Works, 1616.

shire and to Hartshill, his natal place on the Coventry side of Warwickshire, and perhaps prevailed on Jonson to accompany him on this occasion. I augur that the tidings of the serious condition of their lifelong friend had reached the ears of his two eminent contemporaries and fellow-poets, not improbably through a common friend at least of Drayton,¹ Thomas Greene, Shakespear's relative, and had inspired them with an anxiety to meet him once more. It was precisely about the time, when domestic circumstances, not immediately touching the wife, were tending to aggravate mental and physical disorders, and to qualify the gratification at an interview, for which he could scarcely have hoped. Jonson and his fellow-traveller were not improbably left in ignorance of the scandal, nor did they see the main incident with our eyes, or we should have possessed particulars of a pilgrimage so famous and so sad. Where in Stratford the momentary reunion took place, we are left uninformed. The Falcon facing the site of New Place was not then an inn, although the cellarage, which I have personally examined, is quite of that time. The two principal houses were the Bear and the Swan.

There must have been more or less frequent meetings in later days both in London and Stratford, apart from occasional entertainments at the Mermaid and other London inns, where there were agreeable retrospections of early scenes and experiences, of pleasures and triumphs, sometimes not unchecked by disappointments. Nevertheless, it is impossible to be unaware, as soon as we have studied the personal bent and temper of the author with any considerable amount of attention, that he was, of all those connected with the Elizabethan theatre, when he gained eminence, almost the least likely to bestow much time in common festive enjoyment, and was, moreover, when he stayed in London, too busily engrossed by his professional and private

¹ Drayton, Greene, and Shakespear were all of Warwickshire. Hall tells us that he cured Drayton of tertian ague by the administration of a spoonful of syrup of violets, &c.—*Select Observations*, 1657, p. 26.

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concerns to have leisure for the attractions of the tavern and the social club. Edward Alleyn, Philip Henslowe, and himself resembled each other in looking at the practical side. That there were moments alike in town and country, when even he relaxed, is less than doubtful; but the legend of the farewell carouse is a legend and nothing more.

The former place of the inn or hostelry in relation to the private house, when gatherings or interviews were to be arranged for purposes of business or pleasure, forms a rather important element in considering and comprehending the movements of Shakespear, more especially as it seems to be admitted that, even when a man possessed such an unusual facility for receiving guests at his own house, he was accustomed to repair with them to a tavern. The meetings of the poet and his literary friends in the Metropolis at such establishments are intelligible enough; there, down to 1613, he had no independent residence, nor is it probable that he ever inhabited the house in Blackfriars; but at Stratford there was New Place, and still he appears to have resorted elsewhere to sit with friends from London or with neighbours. It was a widely diffused practice which he pursued, and one which has not become obsolete, especially abroad, where at one time political and municipal conferences were held at restaurants, each person bringing or paying for his own wine. The solution of this strange habit is to be sought in the insufficiency of domestic resources for entertaining strangers; and the Shakespears were perhaps no exceptions to the prevailing rule, if we keep out of view any peculiar repugnance in that case on the part of the women of the family to theatrical society, and what it has become the fashion to term Bohemianism. The relations under such circumstances were apt to be between man and man; and the professional acquaintances of the poet did not necessarily know the other inmates of his household. We collect that he saw comparatively little of them himself. In fact, one of the mysteries connected with the present subject is the occupancy of New Place by strangers, more

particularly after the marriage of Susanna Shakespear in 1607. The practice of entertaining acquaintances at taverns long survived in England, and under Anne and the Georges men met each other in this fashion by necessity or from preference. In 1704 a Bishop of Down and Connor writes to his brother in London to invite Consul Ray, just returned from Smyrna, to share a bottle of wine with him at a tavern.

Although he had barely passed middle life, there appears to be too strong a ground for the view that Shakespear deferred his retirement too long, and that when he ultimately arranged to spend at all events the bulk of his time at home, having parted with his theatrical interests, his strength was seriously affected, not so much by his former professional work in London, as by trouble at home, even of a nature to be peculiarly trying to one, who had so strenuously laboured to elevate his social standing. In addition to the mental strain involved in the provision of a constant series of novelties for the stage during several years, and the unavoidable worry and labour attendant on his duties as a manager and actor, he had suffered much annoyance from local disputes, complications, and disasters, which in more than one case threatened to touch him nearly as a land and tithe owner; and he returned home to find his birthplace a hot-bed of disease, as it had been in his father's day, from the total absence of due measures of prevention on the part of the authorities, notwithstanding the most stringent orders by the Council so far back as 1568. Nor is it to be supposed that, as he was situated in London, at a distance from his household, the tenor of his life was conducive to physical welfare, far less longevity. The true history of his personal association with Stratford amounts to little more than occasional visits during the busier years, and a nearly uninterrupted residence there from 1614 to 1616, in a state of declining strength of body, if not of mind.

The years, in which there is clear evidence, or a substantial indication, that he revisited Warwickshire after 1586-7 and

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prior to his final retirement, were 1596, when he lost his son: 1601, when his father died: 1603, 1605, when he may have extended his journey to Oxford as far as Stratford: 1607, when his elder daughter was married on June 5: 1608, when he was deprived of his remaining parent. Between 1586-7 and 1596 it is scarcely too hazardous to conclude that he went down at shorter intervals, as Drayton, whose native place in the county was even farther from London, made it an annual event.

The postponement of the definite departure from London, which I confidently place not earlier than 1613, and concurrent severance of his ties with the theatre and the literary world, were not unnaturally influenced by the contemplation of the ungenial home and the poorer companionship in store for him, with the absolute improbability of return. But there was the reassurance of the medical care of his son-in-law, the presence of his favourite daughter, and the prospect, which was realized to our knowledge in one instance, of a visit from old London intimates. There was repose; there was more than competence; there was the respect, perhaps the homage, of his townsmen; but it was not the consummation which so great a man might have expected, and have been entitled to expect.

The evidence that the poet expired at New Place appears to be only presumptive. He had been quartered somewhere in the outskirts of Stratford not long, at all events, prior to his last sickness, and was, judging from information, which we derive from his cousin, in the habit of occasionally coming into town (that is, into Stratford), when something required his presence.

Of the complaint which proved fatal on the 23rd April, 1616 (O.S.), there are conflicting opinions. It is most likely that it was a putrid fever, arising from the surrounding insanitary conditions, which we actually know to have prevailed from the earliest settlement of the Shakespears in the town, and not impossibly aggravated by secondary causes; and such a view is supported by the hasty

interment on the third day. Yet the occasion cannot possibly have been unattended by some homage, some tribute—even in Stratford, where, not very long after the loss of its sole source of distinction, the local sages, looking round them for the means of obviating a temporary financial embarrassment, could not hit on a happier idea than the sale for timber of the old trees in Stratford churchyard, and that in the winter of 1617 the authorities were cited before the Consistory Court at Worcester for permitting the fabric and bells of the Church of the Holy Trinity to fall out of repair. There is, as usual, no record in the Stratford register of the death, merely an entry in the briefest terms of the funeral, which might have been under the suspected circumstances still more expeditious, had not the claim to a place in the chancel for the remains by virtue of the part-leasehold of the great tithes occasioned some delay.

It is more than doubtful whether the wife was present to witness the last moments, and hear the last accents, of the poet, after so brief a career, embittered by so inordinate a share of private unhappiness. But the daughters were perhaps there, perhaps Dr. Hall. In his will, as it was originally written, no mention of the wife occurred, and the concession of a bed and its furniture arose perhaps from the circumstance, that it was an article of use removed to the place where she was separately domiciled; but Halliwell-Phillipps has amply shown that the bequest of a second-best bed in such a case was habitual, the best piece of furniture of this description being reserved for special guests, and passing as an heirloom. The gift was an interlineation and an after-thought. I have suggested that if the rest of the family was at the Great House or elsewhere at the time of executing the will, the wife was almost certainly not so, and the piece of furniture may have accompanied Mrs. Shakespear to the residence where she was living apart perhaps with friends. In the infirm state of the testator's health it is as likely as not that he overlooked the circumstance of the bed being elsewhere. At any rate

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we cannot avoid seeing that the wife was not foremost in the dying man's thoughts.

Not only did the Halls receive the bulk of the estate, but the entire executorship was vested in them jointly; the second daughter Judith, who was not married till February, 1616, is an actual beneficiary to some extent, and a distantly contingent one to a much larger; but the dominant object of the testator was most manifestly to preserve the hardly won property in his posterity; and he not only followed a very usual course, where there was no male issue, of letting the eldest female succeed, but evinced, on the whole, a preference for the Halls, in spite of the Doctor's distasteful religious views, over Judith and the Quineys, into whose family he just lived to see her married, under circumstances which added a final sorrow to her father's heart, as the ceremony was performed without licence, and the parties were not only fined by the Consistory Court at Worcester, but threatened with excommunication. Susanna more closely resembled her father, and might be expected to nurse the estate, while, whatever Judith might be or do, her intended husband's people were not thought to be financially sound; and at all events Shakespear virtually let the main property devolve on the Halls.

The explicit declaration in the will, that in January, 1616, he was dwelling at New Place, is capable of more than one construction. The theory, that he had become provisionally or temporarily domiciled elsewhere by no means supersedes the house at Stratford as his legal headquarters; it amounts to no more than the possibility that for some unknown reason he may have been in the last year of his life and at the time of his more or less sudden death, as he evidently was in 1614-15, in residence at a point near enough to Stratford "to come to town" at intervals. The state of the draft will, which unexpectedly became the ultimate and sole one, is so unsatisfactory, that it is hard to say whether what was true as to New Place in January of the year con-

tinued to be so in the last week of March. One of the testamentary forms in West's *Symbolography*, 1590, where there is the expression and passage: "... the occupation of this house and fermeholdes wherein I now dwell at H. with thappurtenances"—leads me to suggest that a person might be understood to dwell at an address, yet not be uninterruptedly resident there.

CHAPTER V

Testamentary arrangements—Remarks on the poet's will—His recollection of his "fellows"—Somewhat parallel case of Richard Barnfield (1627)—New Place—Personal character of the poet—His political opinions—Antipathy to Puritanism—Welcombe enclosure question—Survival of conversational fragments—Shakespeare's peculiar reticence—Later relations with the Lucys.

THE history of the will and the true facts as to its first appearance in any shape are, and are likely to remain, mysteries and problems; there is a vague tradition that the step had been projected as early as 1605, when a new and enlarged edition of West's book for the use of layfolk had just appeared.

The poet, just about the time—in 1614-15—when he was permanently settled, if not at Stratford, at all events in the vicinity, was clearly in habitual communication with his kinsman Greene, and he had availed himself of his services as a person of practical experience in 1608-9 in the Addenbroke business, for which Greene then paid a visit to London. The aspect of the document, which has alone descended to us, might tempt us to conclude, that, although it may not represent all that was ever drawn up of such a nature, it is the sole effort of the testator to secure his property posterior to the loss of his son in 1596, and the shortly subsequent presumed withdrawal from coverture; we observe that he declares toward the end of the testament, that he revokes *all former wills*; this is a common covering phrase; but the existence and even survival of one prior one, at all events, executed during the life-time of Hamnet Shakespeare, are not merely likely, but the adoption of

such a precautionary measure is as almost beyond a doubt, as it is eminently characteristic. The disappointment at the frustration of his prospect of a direct heir not unnaturally relaxed his interest in the succession, where the choice lay between the Halls and the Quineys, both of whom presented objections and drawbacks—the former in their Puritanism and the latter in their thriftlessness. It is extremely noteworthy that in an early passage Shakespear had evidently intended to leave a sum of £150 to Thomas Quiney himself, but on reflection caused his partly written description to be struck out and that of Judith to be substituted.

There can be no doubt that *Secret Sponsion* was discountenanced by the law and by the Church, and so far from being final, as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps infers, was liable on any reasonable ground to be set aside and superseded. The more than equivocal circumstances of Susanna's birth, about six months after the marriage,¹ tended to make the execution of a will by her father all the more peremptory, as, had there been any legal bar, the Halls might have been disinherited in favour of Judith and the Quineys. Whatever prejudice and distaste, however, may have arisen toward the wife, the affection for the elder daughter, and the confidence in her, remained, it is well to be concluded, unimpaired: her character in some ways so nearly resembled that of her father.

The author of the *Outlines* did his best to vindicate the poet from anything in the shape of a dishonourable act, by citing parallel examples belonging to the same, or nearly the same, period, where a precontract appears to have been viewed by the parties concerned and their friends as morally tantamount to a solemn process of matrimony, and where the actual nuptials were not celebrated till three months subsequently. The bond lodged in the Consistory Court

¹ Somewhat more than seven months' gestation is considered the
ordinary term.

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of Worcester is dated November 28, 1582, and the first fruit of the union, Susanna Shakespear, was baptized May 26, 1583.

The haste, with which the testamentary dispositions were eventually completed, is familiar enough. What, if any, share Greene had in the matter, we do not know; but he was on the spot, if alterations were needed at short notice, whereas Francis Collins the attorney, usually credited with the manipulation of the business, lived at Warwick—a serious distance in those days on an emergency.¹ I should augur that the apparent addition of the first and second subscriptions to the will bespeak the absence of Collins, when the signature at the end was appended, and his arrival at Stratford only in time to indicate the legal essentiality of the others; the witnesses, Collins and three others, are said to attest the publication or probate, not the signature. But it appears rather difficult to decide the exact sense *then* attachable to the word *publish*. A will is at present understood to be published only, when it has been proved. The question lies, so far as one can see, between Greene and Collins. But a point which merits attention is that the first notion was to employ the seal of the testator in lieu of his signature, as if his ability to execute the instrument was open to doubt, and when Shakespear was found just capable of subscribing with his own hand, *seal* was erased and *hand* interlined. A second detail turns on the name of *Hamlet* Sadler, to whom (another name being probably at the last moment struck out) a legacy is payable. It is fairly evident that the testator dictated the change, and that his legal adviser misunderstood him, and supposed him to mean the hero of the play, whereas he construably intended *Hamnet*, that of his own son, who was christened in 1585 after Hamnet Sadler, a baker

¹ He ultimately succeeded Greene as Town Clerk, and removed to Stratford. Greene, who retired in 1617, had as Town Clerk lived in a house on the Avon on a site, which still preserves the name of Avonbank, and has long been a ladies' school.

of Stratford (as his sister had been after Judith Sadler, the baker's wife), although it is not impossible that the form *Hamnet* was originally a provincial corruption. The orthography of names was formerly, of course, very careless. We find *Hamlet* indifferently spelled *Amleth* and *Hamblet*.

West furnishes a model for this, among other similar purposes, so that Shakespear and his relative might have easily contrived to draw up what we see *mutatis mutandis*, the exordium in the volume being the identical one used in the document, and all the requisite technicalities being ready to hand, even if Greene, as a notary, had not been familiar with them. For the volume in question, which passed through successive editions between 1590 and 1632, was equally designed for the use of notaries and scriveners, and Greene can scarcely have been without a copy in his office.

The form of will in West most nearly approaching the terms found in Shakespear's commences: "In the name of God Amen, the second day of January, 1590. . . . Sicke in body, but of good and perfect memorie (God be praised) do make and ordain this my last wil & testamēt. . . . First I commend my soule into the handes of God my maker, hoping assuredly through the onely merites of Iesus Christ my Sauour to bee made partaker . . ." and so forth—almost the very words of the document which I am considering. The object of directing attention to these *minutiae* is partly to demonstrate that the testator suffered Greene or Collins to obey the set phraseology in vogue, and that the language is by no means construable into an intimation of personal sentiment, and partly to support the view, that the document before us was more probably drawn up by Greene, then laid aside, and ultimately employed on the feared approach of a crisis, the finishing touches in the way of signature being put when the poet was very near his end.

The two leading authorities on testamentary matters

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in Shakespear's day were the work by West and a second by Henry Swinburne, and both first saw the light in 1590. It is not a very extravagant hypothesis that the poet had the opportunity of turning over the leaves of both in his cousin's office; but there was the difference that West yielded only practical directions, while in Swinburne such a rapid student gathered a few points, which served him in his plays. The alleged legal culture of Shakespear may be taken to have amounted to a dexterous assimilation of the legal culture of others.

Of the three autograph attestations accompanying the will, the last, which I am surely correct in apprehending to have been the first one executed, offers these three cardinal points of interest: 1. It gives the name in full; 2. It has the preliminary words *By me*, which truly seem to be regardable as the only written characters outside the mere signature anywhere extant; 3. It presents a strong affinity with the Bodleian example in one way and with the Montaigne one in another. I at first speculated, whether the testator, having signed his name in an unusually elaborate manner, became fatigued, and could only perform the remainder of the operation in the lamentably imperfect fashion which we see. But I afterward came to a different conclusion, which was that a short interval elapsed between the attachment of the third, and the first and second, inscriptions. We cannot avoid being struck by the much firmer grasp of the pen in the words first traced—*By me William Shakspeare*, as if he had exerted all his strength in tracing them; and I submit, following here the apparent opinion of Halliwell-Phillipps, that the two scrawls at the foot of folio 2 and in the margin of folio 1 were added when the poet had become bed-ridden, and was barely equal to the formation of the letters of his name. The foregoing observations may be illustrated by facsimiles of the three entries in what I take to be their true sequence; the first and second follow the third method of spelling the name consistently adopted by the

poet himself since 1603 or thereabout; the remaining one, forming two lines, is barely determinable:—

2nd line William Shalston

William Shalston

Shalston
Shalston

Beyond the enumeration of a few items of inconsiderable importance there is no clue to the nature and extent of the household effects at New Place in 1616. But this historical archive is of strong and vivid interest in our eyes as a proof, how affectionately reminiscent the departed man was, not only of all those, by whom he had been locally surrounded, but of his "fellows," John Hemings, Richard Burbage, and Henry Condell, to each and all of whom he left a memorial, nor did he overlook his godson William Walker. There is no mention of the Davenants on the one hand, or of any literary friends on the other. A payment of £13, 6s. 8d. to Francis Collins his attorney, has the air of an outstanding professional account, which had run down to the last. John Hall was residuary legatee; but the wearing apparel of the testator, with a legacy of £20 to herself, £15 to her three children (with other contingencies), and the house in Henley Street at a nominal rent, were left to his sister Joan, for whom he seems to have entertained a special liking and respect. It is extremely noticeable that New Place and the remainder of the property are explicitly devised to Susanna Hall for better enabling her to carry out her father's testamentary instructions; and that no

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reference is made to the largest purchase ever effected by the poet, that in 1605 of a moiety of the lease of the great tithes of Stratford and adjoining places for £440.¹ The Shakespear estate, then, mainly consisted of New Place and other houses with their appurtenances,² the interest in the great tithes, and the property in Blackfriars.³ The whole bespeaks a respectable rental, regarding contemporary prices.

We have an inventory of the goods of Richard Barnfield the poet, taken after his death in 1627, and amounting altogether to £66, 5s. 11d., of which wearing apparel is answerable for £10, a gilt salt and spoon for £5, and books for *ten shillings*. The normal middle-class or bourgeois library in these days appears, with the fewest exceptions, to have been limited to the capacity of a shelf or two, or a cupboard; and in fact of many of our higher families much the same is to be said, till the seventeenth century was well advanced. A catalogue might be readily drawn up of names, which should be those of owners of libraries of some sort in former times, yet cannot be affirmed to have any such proved association. There is no trace, for instance, of any important or permanent assemblage of books at Gorhambury in the time of Sir Nicholas Bacon or his son. The latter had collected a certain number for a special purpose, but destroyed them on finding them useless. His father caused a bookplate to be engraved in 1574, but apparently for insertion in volumes presented by him to institutions. Shakespear is reputed to have left, in strict personalty, about £400; he was consequently a richer man than the author of the *Affectionate Shepherd* on that score alone, apart from his real estate, in spite of inevitable

¹ John Hall parted with this interest in August, 1624, to the Corporation of Stratford for £400.

² In the will we have a recital of "barnes, stables, orchardes, gardens, landes, tenementes and hereditamentes whatsoever."

³ Still mortgaged in 1616.

yearly charges in support or in aid of his relatives at home during his long residence in London; and New Place was a residence of exceptional requirements, even if it was not at all sumptuously furnished. It is true that so far back as 1598, when he had completed the purchase of New Place, he was judged by the Quineys, already involved in pecuniary straits, likely to have £30 (= £300 or thereabout of our currency) available by way of loan, if no one else could be found, and Richard Quiney, dating from a London address his application to the poet, may have approached him only, when others had failed to respond; but between 1598 and 1616, or rather 1618, much of the ready cash or savings, partly swollen perhaps by some gift from Southampton in 1597, had been invested in different kinds of property. The point which renders the Barnfield inventory most serviceable, however, is the entry under *Books*; ten shillings of 1627 were equivalent to sixty or so of our money; the number of volumes purchaseable for such a sum was excessively small at a groat each; and if Barnfield contented himself at a greater distance from London with such a handful, probably Shakespear, considering his temperament and surroundings, had no more. The particulars of sale relative to an auction at the birthplace in the first half of the last century have no actual Shakespearian bearing; but a few lots were subsequently recovered, and are visible *in situ*. Our whole clue to a Shakespear Library is limited, apart from the Ovid and Montaigne, to the circumstance that Hall left his own books to his son-in-law Nash, and among these there were more than possibly some once belonging to the poet, accruing to Hall as residuary legatee.

It becomes almost imperative to bring into one focus in succinct terms the facts connected with the disappearance of New Place, so far as they are within knowledge. Every pilgrim to Stratford beholds on the site of the dwelling-house of the poet certain vestiges or remains of early foundations, and discovers that these are all that survive

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of the Shakespear residence. He is correctly informed; but many are apt to conclude that the rest was as wantonly destroyed as the mulberry-tree itself in the eighteenth century by an individual insensible to their common historical and personal interest, or in spite of it. This was not so. The house of the poet had long been superseded by the Clopton building, which did not even occupy the same area as its predecessor, while the link between the mulberry and the poet was not invested with publicity, till portions of the felled tree were modelled into objects of remembrance. I must even be permitted to mention that a copy of *Liber Precum Publicarum*, printed a year or two prior, bears the signature of *Robert Cloptoun*, 1562. In 1705 Hugh Clopton, Esq., of Stratford, published and dedicated to Queen Anne Sir Edward Walker's *Historical Discourses*—Walker, of course, of New Place.

It is in such a philosophical poem as *Hamlet* that Shakespear discovers and uses opportunities for shadowing, in the person of a character regarded as eccentric and peculiar, his own feelings, whether as a thinker or as a politician. The dramatist was naturally cautious how he committed himself by any criticism susceptible of being interpreted as a reflection or satire on the government, and when he penned the subjoined passage, he merely recorded a fact within the observation of the Prince of Denmark:—

“*Ham.*: By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked,¹ that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe—”

The writer already discerned the approach of a democratic wave, which was in not so many years to sweep away both courtier and court; and on which side his sympathy lay it was not for him to disclose—it is for us only to guess. He would have scarcely deemed it safe to pronounce in so

¹ That is picked, in allusion to the pointed shoes in use. I suppose that the word bears the same import on the title of St. Augustine's *Piked Meditations*. Perhaps they were select, perhaps pointed.

many words in conversation the sentiment, which he ascribes to Richard II., where the King says:—

“ . . . For within the hollow crown,
That rounds the hollow temples of a king,
Keeps death his court, and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state, and grinning at his pomp ” :

a notion derived from the *Dance of Death*. In the 107th Sonnet we read :—

“ And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.”

Five years only after his death the Parliament of 1621 met, and sounded the first official note of the coming storm, which gathered in that of 1628, and burst in that of 1640. Shakespear was his own Hamlet. If he truly acted the Ghost on the boards, he acted the philosophizing and speculative Prince himself in the book and in the closet. There was more than a hint for some of the salient points in the antecedent play and in the prose narratives. The dramatic creation is a lay figure.

The poet sinned, in the opinion of his friend Chettle, in not having added himself to the phalanx of loyal bards, who broke into elegiac verse on the death of the queen. But he neither mourned the parting ruler, nor acclaimed her successor. Do we blame him? He had his own views of the Great in name, and contented himself perforce with giving to them a guarded expression.

But I look upon him as broadly, except where as in the case of Puritanism his particular calling was affected, a man of republican sentiment, as a member of that political party, which in his time was an insignificant and almost inaudible minority, and had to wait many years, before its turn arrived. In the *Merchant of Venice*, Shakespear puts into the mouth of Shylock a strong plea for human equality and general religious tolerance, just as in the same drama he makes the dusky suitor of Portia, the Prince of Morocco, vindicate himself from the common prejudice against his

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colour. The words of Shylock seem to justify us in hesitating to think that, even if freer institutions had been granted, while Shakespear lived, he would have gone so far as those men, who overthrew monarchy in England, and established a despotism of another kind in America. He was simply, I apprehend, an advocate for individual freedom; and at the same time, perhaps, in as large a measure as Montaigne, the holder of unusually liberal notions on the subject of human equality. The Jew argues that the Christian and himself are endowed with similar faculties and prone to similar infirmities. Those of his race, he puts it, have eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions. They are fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as the rest of humanity. This was tolerably plain speech for the sixteenth century, as it was not till Cromwell came into absolute power for a season (too brief an one), that the Jews obtained in England any indulgence, while there had been no country, where they were in former times more mercilessly persecuted, and they had to wait, till the nineteenth century was far advanced, before they acquired here as full political rights as they had long enjoyed at Venice, where the local costume is so sadly travestied in the Shakespearian and every other play which lays the scene there.

The poet was in fact a subtle exponent *in the third person* of abuse and injustice, and played, yet in a different way, agreeably to the difference of circumstances, the same part, which his contemporary Montaigne played in France. Both were political champions and liberators without being conscious, perhaps, of this part of their missions, as much as Voltaire in France and Cobbett in England at a much later period became, when indirectness of allusion had grown less imperative. Yet Shakespear observed exemplary caution in introducing references, which might be construed into a personal bearing on those in power, and he never committed himself, as Jonson, Marston, and Chapman did in the case of

Eastward Hoe, and Middleton, at a later date, in the case of *A Game at Chess*. We perceive how thrifty he was even of the casual compliment, which could not wound, and might beneficially operate, and in immediate connection with this point there is the doubtful passage—to say no more—in *Henry VIII.*, where Cranmer, at the baptism of Elizabeth, is made to prognosticate her future glory as queen, and Henry intimates that the primate had now made him a man. A historical play is not necessarily true to history, and there can be no objection to the dramatist selecting the moment, when it seemed that Elizabeth might, from the ascendancy of the Boleyn party, succeed her father; but Cranmer's foreknowledge of the length and character of her reign is sufficiently exact to be open to the suspicion of having been interpolated by another writer, whose comic vein is of an equally thin quality with his serious and heroic one. At the same time, if we are to go with Mr. Fleay and others anything like the whole way, the Shakespearean series of plays in its different stages of evolution contains countless hits at the men and literature of the day, yet stopping short of any political animadversion or innuendo. Well, those, who were prompt enough at the time to detect such matters, failed to discern so much as some later gentlemen with inferior facilities for assurance.

The revolt against Episcopacy, which had commenced during the youth of Shakespear, and which developed into what was known as Puritanism, constituted an influential secession from the established Protestant communion, which was perhaps of no strong personal significance to the poet, but which happened to affect or impress him indirectly in a two-fold way. The tenets, language, and dress of the new party suggested material for ridicule or censure; and the spirit of nonconformity spread over the whole country, more or less, in the course of a few years, and took possession of the household at Stratford, rendering the atmosphere of the residence less cheerful, and the sympathy with the theatrical associations and bias of the master less cordial

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even than before. I insist on this view the more strongly and trustingly, inasmuch as the distaste of Shakespear for Puritanism was deep and uncontrollable enough to lead him in one of his plays to emphasize the sentiment more pungently than we can find him doing in respect of any other matter of real life or history incidentally interpolated. The passage is in *Twelfth Night* :—

"*Maria* : Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan.

"*Sir Andrew* : O, if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog.

"*Sir Toby* : What, for being a Puritan? Thy exquisite reason, dear Knight.

"*Sir Andrew* : I have no exquisite reason for 't, but I have reason good enough."

This, with the remark of the clown in the *Winter's Tale*, that the only Puritan in a company sings psalms to horn-pipes, and other analogous utterances, must be taken to reflect the personal sentiments of the author, naturally adverse to the movement, and intensified by its already commencing interference with his literary and commercial interests.

He would have witnessed the production of the play of the *Puritan* in 1607 with satisfaction, and (although he had then quitted London) he was doubtless on similar grounds not displeased by the successful reception in 1614 of Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*.

The poet was averse from the new sectarianism as a spirit and a movement hostile to him as a dramatist and theatrical proprietor, and he must have been aware that in levelling ridicule or satire at it, he trod on tolerably safe ground, since the new Stuart dynasty, glad to shake off the old gloomy traditions of their birthland, manifested an equal distaste for the Puritans, with an even stronger bias than could have been anticipated toward the stage and its environments; and we know that Anne of Denmark displayed a warm interest in all the entertainments at Court and in the principal playhouses. But in Stratford, in common with other provincial centres, the prejudice against the stage, so far from being corrected and modified by the

attitude and temper of the Court, seems, just at the moment, when Shakespear had come down into Warwickshire to spend his remaining years among those, on whom his successes had shed an indirect lustre, to have grown more virulent, and the penal fine of 10s. for breaking the municipal order in respect to theatrical performances was raised to £10, and such things pronounced "inconvenient and unlawful." It is more surprising to find such a man as Sir Edward Coke on the side of the opponents to theatrical exhibitions in spite of their popularity and sanction at Court. In his *Speech and Charge at Norwich Assizes*, 1607, he explicitly says: "The abuse of Stage players, wherewith I find the Countrey much troubled, may easily be reformed. They having no Commission to play in any place without leave; and therefore, if by your willingnesse they be not entertained you may soone be rid of them."

The sole descents to us of any conversational fragments, where Shakespear occurs as a party, are the record left by Thomas Heywood the poet of Shakespear's dissatisfaction with Jaggard the publisher for having in a reprint of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1612, improperly inserted two translations from Ovid by Heywood as his work, and certain not very lucid entries in the *Diary* of Thomas Greene relative to a proposed enclosure of some of the common fields within the manor of Welcombe, the property of the Combes, in 1614-15, as to which matter opinion in the borough was divided. It has been deemed that the poet felt a profound, if mainly a sentimental, objection to the step contemplated by the municipal authorities; on the 17th November, 1614, Greene informs us that his cousin told him what was thought to be the extent of the scheme, but that both Mr. Hall and himself doubted if anything would be actually done; the Corporation was opposed to the measure, and had through Greene and otherwise tried to win over Shakespear to the same view, while, on the other side, the Combes instructed their agent to offer the poet a guarantee against any personal loss as tithe owner since 1605 and also as a

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freeholder of long standing.¹ The matter was still in abeyance in March, 1615, when at the Warwick Assizes Lord Chief Justice Coke stayed farther proceedings, and affairs were *statu quo* in 1616. In September, 1615, Shakespear was still haunted by the idea, and according to Greene declared "that he could not bear the enclosing of Welcombe." This was about six months before his death, and long prior to that his health in every sense had begun to give way. There was the normal symptom of mental over-taxation—the nervous irritability. There had been during a long succession of years acute and incessant intellectual tension and a store of private sorrow,² and it is perfectly intelligible, that his feeling on the subject was prone to fluctuation.

The intimation to Greene has been variously interpreted, and it has been judged more probable, on the whole, that Shakespear at least acquiesced in the measure. After all, we have less to regard the words spoken than the rescue of a few syllables out of all those, which those lips pronounced. I personally collect, however, from the tenor of Greene's account that he was equally averse from the enclosure, and was also materially concerned as an owner, but that Shakespear, owing to his bad state of health, took no active part in the controversy and negociation. His own immediate interests were secured, whichever way the matter went. The municipal authorities were perhaps guided by their legal adviser Greene.

¹ "Shakespear and the Enclosure of Common Fields at Welcombe," Being a Fragment of the Private Diary of Thomas Greene, Town Clerk of Stratford on Avon, 1614-17. Edited by C. M. Ingleby. 4°, 1885. The entries referring to the poet are between November, 1614, and September, 1615.

² There had been fires at Stratford in 1594 and 1595, and one still more serious in the autumn of 1614, when 54 houses were destroyed. A fourth occurred in 1616, which it is possible that the poet lived to witness, as a public proclamation respecting it, dated May 11, was probably some time posterior to the event. While the Welcombe difficulty was yet unsettled, and certain of the inhabitants feared a loss of their common rights, the town itself is described as "lying in the ashes of desolation" from the catastrophe of 1614. Comp. p. 65.

The enclosure of common fields was a source of trouble and dissension all over England; it was by no means specially a local grievance. We find it arousing indignation and resistance in the fifteenth century.¹ The proceedings at Warwick in 1615-16 have the air of having been the issue of that visit of Greene to London in the winter of the previous year.

The pair of utterances, transmitted at second-hand, unless the familiar tradition of Jonson and the latten spoons may be accepted,² is all that the world possesses of the kind outside the allusions, more or less direct and more or less trustworthy, in the Works, to assist it in realizing the speaker in his tangible personality. The singular exaltation of Shakespear within the last century helps to shut out from our view and recollection the fact, that the same conditions apply to the majority of his contemporaries and even of writers of more recent date, whose productions offer no autobiographical clues, and whose families have preserved no documentary elucidations.

Heywood was unfortunate just about the same time in having some of his work appropriated, not by a publisher, but by a private individual otherwise unknown as a writer, Henry Austin, a schoolmaster at Ham, Surrey, who brought out as his own a metrical Ovidian narrative, called the *Scourge of Venus*, in 1613, for which the true author severely (and appropriately), took him to task in the preface to his *Brazen Age*. Those were days when literary brigandage was in a fairly flourishing condition. Bacon, Drayton, Daniel, Barnfield, and many more, suffered the same wrong

¹ Curiously enough in a fragment of a commonplace-book of Gabriel Harvey, 1584, there is matter on this topic. See a note in my *Shakespear's Library*, 1875, part 2, ii. 390.

² It is said that he agreed to be godfather to one of Jonson's children, and proposed a set of apostle spoons in latten (or mixed metal), adding, that Jonson might translate them. Thoms' *Anecdotes and Traditions*, 1829, p. 2. The story appears to have been repeated to Sir Nicholas Lestrang of Hunstanton (1603-54) by "Mr. Dun," presumably Dr. Donne.

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and annoyance from the lax enforcement and observance of copyright.

The three Jaggards, William, John,¹ and Isaac, produced altogether a fair store of good work, and were in communication with many of the authors of the day. Shakespear was true to his habitual reserve, when he limited his action to a remark to a third party, at least, so far as we can hear, since the actual offender was equally within reach, if he had chosen to address him directly. Where the echoes of the vocal accents are so wonderfully few and faint, it seems natural to linger, as it were, on the ground, and try to make the most of what we have. Jonson, Marston, and one or two others have been brought home to us—perhaps a little too much—by Drummond. In the long course of years spent in London among theatrical and literary people Shakespear must have uttered much eminently deserving of record; but he had no Drummond at his side, no seer into the future—save Thorpe, the publisher of the *Sonnets*. The wonder is, that we have those two likenesses.

The poet lived through the whole of that striking period, which witnessed the acrimonious, foolish, and rather vulgar literary controversies of Greene, Harvey, and Nash, and of Jonson, Marston, and Dekker, as well as the attacks of Greene on other writers for the stage, notably Shakespear himself, and preserved an immovable silence and neutrality—an advised one, I apprehend, since in matters where his substantial interests were involved he was never remiss in vindicating himself. But he there employed the pen of his lawyer; and this attitude proceeded in some degree from temper; for at the outset of his career, when he was lampooned by Greene, he refrained even from any expression of feeling audible to us. Where, again, his name had been

¹ John Jaggard issued in 1697 a volume entitled *The Shepherds Garland*, not improbably that it might be mistaken for a new edition of Drayton's *Idea*, *The Shepheards Garland*, 1593, with which it has nothing to do. All the Jaggards were unscrupulous pirates.

improperly used by Jaggard, he broke silence only when Heywood approached him, and then went no farther than to intimate his displeasure at an injustice, in which another was involved.

As regards the remark to Heywood, the very words are stated by him to have been, that "he [Shakespear] was much offended with Master Jaggard, that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his name." We are not told that he resented Jaggard's equally dishonest attributions to him in the first edition of that small miscellany of poems by Barnfield and others. It is fairly certain that no copy of the volume had reached him. Probably Heywood brought one with him, when he saw the poet at his lodging. The misappropriation casts a side-light on Shakespear's want of touch with current books, even with his own. Heywood took the matter more seriously than his friend, and fiercely assailed Jaggard in a postscript to the *Apology for Actors*, published the same year. It is thoroughly characteristic that Shakespear was more deeply affected by the local enclosures than by the literary piracy. It is true that the end was then nearer.

As a matter of fact the title-page to the volume does not explicitly state that the supplementary matter is by Shakespear; the sagacious Jaggard left it to be inferred. But in the Malone copy a cancel title occurs, as if in response to a complaint by Heywood, omitting Shakespear's name altogether. Heywood does not apprise us that his friend signified any personal intention of moving in the matter.

He did not even signify his philosophical indifference to detraction, as Marston does, with dubious sincerity, in the preface to *Parasitaster, or the Fawn*, 1606. He observed an inflexible silence, to which the world was at liberty to give its own interpretation. How often was his ear importuned by pæans pronounced on themselves and on each other by excellent gentlemen his friends, and was he not entitled now and again to remember, if not to retort, that he, too, was a poet, and to entertain a sort of hope, in spite of his hypochondriacal

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apprehension of speedy oblivion, that generations unborn would set a truer value upon him. Even Montaigne gave himself fifty years of survival after death. The lapse of three centuries has stimulated the vitality of both, while millions, who stood at their side, and perhaps adjudicated upon them, are Dumb Deadnesses.

What man, before or since, accomplished a great mission with such vast gain to others, with so little in certain ways to himself? Yet he had compressed into that narrow span of five-and-twenty or thirty years of luxuriant activity all perhaps that he had to say to us and of us.

If he had been a less egregious personage, if he had approached his dramatic contemporaries at a more equal level, we might have listened to louder encomiums on his genius, less qualified criticisms on his culture and art. His exceeding greatness hindered his free association with others. The commendation of a mediocre author is a less hazardous enterprise, and costs less self-sacrifice to his friends, than that of a Shakespear. The poet, apart from the play-going public, stood uncomfortably enough between such as imperfectly understood him and such as, Jonson for example, understood him perfectly well. Knowing, as we do, the constitutional reticence of Shakespear, and his studied abstention from criticism on his contemporaries, it is amazing that a modern biographer should have discredited himself by offering, even as a suggestion, that the "envious windsucker," exposed by Chapman in the preface to his complete *Homer*, was Shakespear. Of all unlikely things and unhappy guesses this is the unlikeliest and the unhappiest.

Shakespear, by virtue of his profession, spoke, as it were, with many tongues, almost with a greater number than have been assigned to Rumour, and to each of his *personæ* it was his function to allot his part. But even the greatest artists have their preferences, and throw into certain characters a preponderant measure of private sentiment and bias; and I think it was so here. Shakespear was most himself either in those lofty flights where, in the conscious pride of intellect,

he has made Hamlet or Jaques reflect his own deep and exalted philosophy, or in the humbler scenes, where he has shown his kindly and humorous eye for those aspects of life, which were familiar to him in his youth and early manhood, and which he happily did not suffer to pass away with him. Perhaps in those passages and directions, where he was led to follow certain fugitive conceits, the poet presents himself to least advantage, and we are apt to regret that he surrendered himself to such models or patterns; here and there, too, a bit from a First Sketch was suffered to creep in unrevised; and these very occasional lapses are as readily distinguished from the prevailing naturalness and modernness as if they had been printed in ink of a different colour.

A regrettable *lacuna* in the biographical sequence is the by no means improbable relations in later life between Shakespear and the family at Charlecote. That any youthful prank of the poet should have rankled in the mind, or lingered in the remembrance, of the Lucys, when the offender, to whatever his misdemeanour might have actually amounted, had become so conspicuous as a writer and so affluent in his circumstances, is singularly unlikely, more particularly looking at the bookish and artistic tendencies of Sir Thomas himself. But there is nothing, it appears, but conjecture to assist us, unless we estimate at a higher rate the symptoms of kindness on the part of the justice introduced into the scene between Shallow and Page, which I have cited.

It is perhaps to be remembered, that Lucy, dying in 1600, did not witness the more liberal feeling toward the stage and the player which set in with the Stuarts. Yet the friendly attitude of Southampton and the favourable sentiments of Southampton's sovereign must have reached his ears; and we are not too lightly to abandon or dismiss the idea, that he and Shakespear met in London or elsewhere under more agreeable conditions.

CHAPTER VI

Personal character of Shakespear—Sources of his success as a dramatist—
The man of genius and of business—Traces of self-appraisalment in
early writings—Indirect autobiographical allusions in the Plays—His
private sorrows reflected in some of them—Autographic remains—
Forgeries—New key to the signatures—Lost letter from James I.
to the poet—Explanation of the loss of Shakespear MSS.—The
Scriveners' Guild.

I RECOGNIZE in Shakespear the painter of all men in all
their fortunes and all their moods, the writer who could
sympathize with our frail and composite nature in every
aspect, him, whose mighty and plastic intellect had the power
beyond all others of coining into language each varying,
fluctuating, and graduated feeling or passion of our race,
and of finding an appropriate vehicle for the expression of
every imaginable phase of sentiment and line of conduct—a
mouthpiece for all throughout the whole range of nature,
art, and thought in the individual, whom the part or speech
best fitted. 'This great gift was due to his concurrent
training and experience as an actor and a writer for the
stage; and it is apparent that in his dramatic works, on
which his fame rests, he presents and marshals before us in
turn an infinite diversity of characters with masterly dis-
crimination. He was emphatically the actor turned author;
and there is a passage in a book, apparently written by an
Oxonian long after the poet's decease,¹ in which, after
speaking of the story of Lucrece as one, which had been
treated, the writer proceeds to refer to ACTORIDES as dead,
as if he had in his mind a person, who combined, like Shake-

¹ *Ovid's Ghost*, by Edwardus Fuscus, 1657.

spear, the literary with the practical or professional side. Above all, perhaps, there is that subtlety and fecundity of imagination, that soaring flight of thought, manifested in some of the later series of dramas, commencing with *Hamlet*, where he has presented ideas entertained and expressed by others a thousand times, yet never before or since with such startling novelty or force, evolving from familiar incidents strange problems and weird possibilities.

We have in him a man of pre-eminent genius, who added to his natural faculty as a writer a complete grasp of the technical business and wants of a theatre; and before him, as the prompter-in-chief, the whole world passed in course of time. He made it his function to embody deep and fine thoughts in simple language; not to clothe commonplaces in academical phraseology. But that, as a general proposition, we are to interpret the text of the plays in a personal sense, I am as far indeed from believing or granting, as I am, on the contrary, from refusing to admit that certain passages play a double part.

Nor am I a convert to the theory that Shakespear was a philanthropist or a humanitarian. Nothing can well be more delusive and improper. Shakespear was in himself the most extraordinary union of the man of genius with the man of business; the records of his friendly intercourse are of the scantiest nature; his relations during his many years' residence in London with his wife on the one hand and his parents and other kinsfolk on the other, all more or less dependent on his support or assistance, have to be divined from indirect glimpses; nearly all the few casual notices of him present him in the light of a peremptory stickler for his legal dues; and there is not a single example of a book from his pen having been offered as a gift to a relative, an acquaintance, or a patron. A copy of the *Sonnets*, which once belonged to Dr. Farmer, bears an early inscription elsewhere given; and the Huth copy of *Hamlet*, 1611, has on the title: "For Mark Stapfer"; but neither of these memoranda is of direct significance.

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Such an absence of direct self-assertion, accompanied by such a mysterious apathy in the fate alike of his printed and manuscript work, renders it the less surprizing that there should be a coterie prepared to dispute the existence of Shakespear as an author, and it is difficult to say how far this cult might have gone, had not, in addition to the documentary proof of his social and professional rank, the authorship of the plays and poems by him alone been so incontrovertibly established and, as it were, bound up together.

Many Englishmen of former, and indeed of all, times might be named, whose personality as individuals strikes us more impressively than in their literary or other professional capacity. On the contrary, we seem to feel that, in the case of Shakespear, his peculiarly lofty rank as an author considered, the personal distinction is infinitely less conspicuous than it should by right be—less so, in fact, than that of several of his contemporaries, who, measured by their intellectual products, were, and are, not for a moment comparable with him; and this injustice must be said to have largely arisen from his own self-centred indifference and his ostensible incompatibility, alike social and domestic. Who else would have left us in absolute ignorance of his contact with Elizabeth, with James I., with Southampton, with the Herberts of Wilton and the Earl of Rutland, insomuch that we have to depend almost exclusively on tradition and hearsay; and he was not only silent himself; he was surrounded by unappreciative relatives and apathetic, perhaps jealous, literary acquaintances, conspiring to let all such precious memorials perish.

There is, however, in some of the Sonnets a vein of self-glorification, which is not perceptible in the riper work of the author, and which seems to betray or confirm their early origin. The poet tells the object addressed that he will live in his "powerful rhyme," which is to survive monuments of princes and other imposing mundane things—is, in fact, to be *are perennius*. In the 17th of the series there is in the

opening line a suggestion of a privately harboured prospect of posthumous fame :—

“ Who will believe my verse in time to come,
If it were fill'd with your most high deserts—”

In the 23rd the writer says :—

“ O, let *my books* be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast ”

as if at that point of time his works were to a sensible extent before the world, and at any rate familiar to playgoers and readers. But unfortunately the *books* in the writer's mind were almost doubt the two lyrical productions of 1593-4. This perilous form of conceit Shakespear outgrew, and it is scarcely discernible even by inference in the plays, where there would not be, of course, the same licence for that sort of direct personal allusion. Yet in *Hamlet*, iii. 2, in reference to the king having died a short time before, the Prince exclaims : “ O heavens ! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet ! Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year. But, by our Lady, he must build churches, then—” It was just about the same time, that, in professing reference to Yorick, where he apostrophizes him as one “ who, take him for all in all, we shall never look on his like again,” there may be a suspicion, that he had a side view to himself, to the undervalued writer, whom at the most those about him ranked with many a clever fellow at his elbow.

Beyond those scattered passages in the Plays, where he appears to me to refer more or less indirectly to his domestic concerns, to the loss of his father and mother, of his son, to the survival of the memory of a great man, and more clearly, yet outside his own circle, to the death of Marlowe, the poet *proprio motu*, so far as one can see, published nothing either of a biographical or of a self-appreciative nature, and the Sonnets, on their appearance under other auspices, afforded, not so much to such as bought or read them in

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1609, as to generations to come, indications of a sense on the writer's part of a reputation likely to increase and to endure. At the same time, there must have been assuredly many, who scanned these strange productions with a wistful eye, who discerned in them far less than we do, and who cast them aside after a cursory perusal as of dubious merit, if not of dubious authenticity, since they bore very slender resemblance to the other lyrics on the one hand or to the plays on the other. We may not doubt that a few of his trusted London intimates, and perhaps his legal kinsman, Greene of Stratford, could have made some startling additions to our biographical stores. He must have imparted his confidences here and there; but the guardians of any secrets kept their counsel—perhaps, on the whole, it was as well.

Amid his astonishing worldly successes he lost in turn his only son Hamnet (1596), his father (1601) and his mother (1608), of whom he had had it in his power to see so little in later years, his two brothers, Edmund (1607) and Richard (1613), both under thirty, and the former the sole relative, who displayed any congenial talent; and beyond this series of bereavements there was the unsympathetic attitude—or more—of those, who remained. We are not to hasten to the conclusion, that the poet looked on such private incidents without emotion; yet his mind was of a cast, which was eminently capable of fortifying itself against personal sorrow by immersion in professional engagements at a distance. It might be unwise to pronounce his life an unhappy one without pausing to consider his moral and intellectual temperament and his autonomous faculty.

Even seated in his chair in London, with his manuscript before him, he could not refrain now and then from interpolating sentences of autobiographical import, from making his sentiments audible and visible on the boards and on paper, if only to himself alone, and why should he? I have elsewhere called attention to the presumptive record of his father's latest moments in *Henry V.* and to the curious and hitherto unsurmised obligation of the poet to a book of the

day for the notion of the sharp nose and the fumbling with the sheets. There are, however, two other analogous testimonies in respect to the loss of his son in 1596 and that of his mother in 1608, which, if they are really what they seem to be, reflections of personal feeling, must be pronounced extremely pathetic and equally interesting. The first is from *King John*, iii. 4, where Constance is made to say:—

“Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me in all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form—”

The place in *Coriolanus*, v. 3, is less directly significant, yet it breathes the air of having been committed to writing at a juncture, when the loss of his parent was passionately present to Shakespear, and the exemplification of maternal influence and filial duty acquired a special opportuneness and charm. These references, and perhaps that to Marlowe, co-operate in each other's support, and in favour of the writer permitting himself on occasion an outlet for his private impressions in the actual scene and in the printed page.

The autographic remains are scanty and unsatisfying enough, and are familiar as they are scanty. They are limited to the three signatures to the will, the two to the Blackfriars deed and counterpart, the inscriptions in the Aldine *Ovid's Metamorphoses* of 1502 and in the English *Montaigne* of 1603, and an eighth inserted in a copy of the second folio of the Plays. Of the official examples, five in number, the genuineness is unimpeachable. Of the remaining three the history is more or less known. The *Ovid* was acquired for the Bodleian about forty years since at a London auction; and it carries absolutely all its known antecedents and credentials on its face. Its value is peculiar, for it is a copy of a classic, of which Shakespear was evidently fond, and with which he was as evidently acquainted in

OVIDII METAMORPHOSEON
LIBRI QVINTDECIM.



*This little Book of Ovid was given to me
by W. Hall who said it was once Will
Shakespeare*

Ch

1682



comparatively early days, since a quotation from the *Amores* is on the title of the *Venus and Adonis*, 1593; and the writing is, I judge, earlier than that in the *Montaigne*, and consequently firmer—in fact, the firmest of all that we have. Its identification is scarcely in want of support from the memorandum at the foot of the title-page, of which I annex a facsimile, since in 1682 no one would have taken the pains to fabricate an actual signature—much less an abridged one.

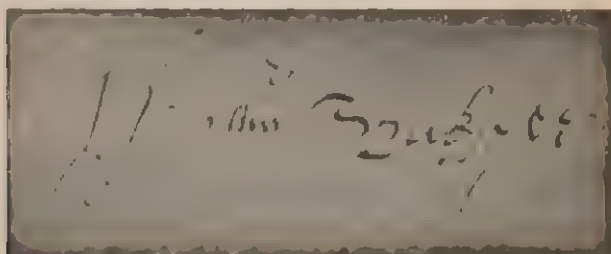
The autograph on the flyleaf of a copy of Florio's *Montaigne*, 1603, assuming it to be made at the time of publication, is nine years prior to the Blackfriars conveyance and thirteen prior to the testamentary subscriptions; and the faintness of the final letter of the surname, as if the ink had failed, or the writer had hesitated, whether he should add the terminal, is a circumstance to be noted. The characters are traced with greater decision than those of 1613 and 1616, but are more tremulous than the lines of the *Ovid*. But it is by no means destitute of a pedigree, even of a fairly respectable one. It seems to be certain that before 1780 the volume came into the hands of the Rev. Edward Patteson of Smethwick, near Birmingham, a book-collector; the representatives of the poet may have lost interest in such matters, even before they became extinct about 1806; and there is a probability that any would drift to the nearest large centre, if it should be the case, that the original owner brought it down to Stratford, or that the Halls obtained it and other books from his quarters in London after his death. Although Mr. Patteson was accustomed to shew his prize to his private circle as a curiosity, it awakened no public attention, till it passed into the hands of a son, who resided at Sheen, near London, and fell under the notice of experts. The place of original recovery—so near to Stratford—the existence of the signature from the outset, and the insufficiency of motive, when the unique value was still to be appreciated, are points not readily combated; but beyond that a peculiar and unmistakable

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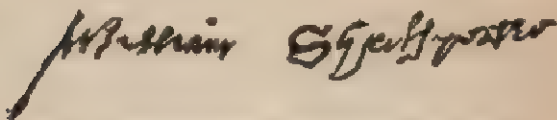
indication, which I first detected some years ago, and to which I shall presently revert, seems to set the matter at rest.

The relic first brought to light by Ward the actor,¹ father-in-law of Roger Kemble, in the eighteenth century, when there was no keen feeling on such a subject distantly approaching that at present entertained, and when, as in the case of the *Montaigne*, no one surmised the immense rarity of such an autograph, may be taken by a comparison with the second signature to the will as belonging to the same date and physical conditions, and my faith in it is farther fortified by the circumstance that it has been traced back to the time of George I.

The written characters accompanying the Museum copy of Florio's *Montaigne* stand on different ground from the Ward example, while neither, as it seems to me, belongs to any known school or style of counterfeit. I give facsimiles of the two in immediate juxtaposition for comparison:



Signature belonging to Florio's *Montaigne*, 1603.

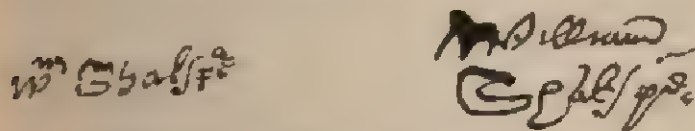


Signature attached to the Ward second folio, 1632.

A certain correlation is traceable between the extant signatures in documents and books, tending to some extent to

¹ Ward died in 1773.

establish their common authenticity, and, which is not less important, to identify them all with one and the same individual. I am looking at the forms of a few of the letters, and I remark more especially the downstroke in the *W* of the Bodleian *Ovid* and in the *W* and *m* of the subscription on the third folio of the will (*William* and *me*), no less than the full point equally present in the *W* of the christian name in the *Ovid*, in the *Montaigne*, both written in presumed good health in or before 1608, in the two Blackfriars deeds of 1613, which already betray a weaker grasp of the pen, in the Ward specimen, and in the signature at the end



Shakespeare's handwriting on official papers of 1613.

of the will, written in sickness in 1616. The scrawl on the first folio of the will is almost destitute of significance for the reasons already assigned; and the 1613 signatures are also somewhat cramped and defective, in large measure perhaps from the limited space reserved for the purpose on the folds of the documents, somewhat for the same reason that in the case of the will two of the subscriptions were by no means improbably added in bed. The distance and disparity in the writing in the *Ovid* and *Montaigne*, in the Blackfriars deeds, and in the will, constitute a history in little of the writer. The whole body of remains, however, is classifiable into two sections: those executed—the *Ovid* and *Montaigne*—in earlier life, and those belonging to the period of declining health—the six others; and I submit that they are all authenticated by the peculiar full point within the *W*.¹ There is a certain heredity in handwriting; and I

¹ In the Rylands library at Manchester there is a copy of Foulke Robartes on Tithes, 1616, with a fictitious signature of Shakespeare on title. In 1852 an imperfect copy of the *Statutes*, 1598, came into the possession of a Thomas Bragge, who is supposed to have been a member of

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would call attention to the subscription of Mrs. Hall (Susanna Shakespear) to a deed, which occurs in the *Outlines* (i. 254), as if the witness had studied examples of her father's hand to serve the very limited and occasional purposes, to which she probably applied the art.

While we may agree in characterizing the scanty calligraphic footprints of Shakespear and his father as uncouth and illiterate, a collation of them with the signature of the poet's uncle, Henry Shakespear of Snitterfield (Halliwell-Phillipps, ii. 211) on the one hand, and that of the poet on the other, establishes to my satisfaction more than a pedigree and kindred, namely, an advance. On the flyleaf of a copy of Ferdinando Pulton's *Abstract of the Penal Statutes*, 1581, are some MSS. memoranda of the time, presenting the peculiar *S*, which might otherwise seem a special mark of the poet's imperfect formation of letters, and I have repeatedly observed in examples of Elizabethan writing similar analogies with Shakespear's *k* and *p*, as well as his *s*. We have been accustomed to see a charge preferred against the poet of spelling his name in an arbitrary manner or with an indifference to the true orthography. But the fact seems to be quite different. He personally adopted at three successive dates or stages three varying forms: *Shakespeare* (1593), *Shakespere* (1598), and *Shakspere* (about 1603); and to the last he adhered. The first departure from the name, as it occurs in the Epistle before *Venus and Adonis*, was when he inserted a modified type on the title of *Love's Labor's Lost*, when he prepared it for the press, as I believe, in 1598, and Jaggard, in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599, followed this

a family settled at Stratford in the sixteenth century; and on the fifth leaf of the Table occurred, written lengthwise in the outer margin, a signature of *W^m. Shakespere*. The inscription was a clumsy counterfeit of that in the *Montaigne*. The forgery was probably executed about 1840, or at any rate between 1838, when the *Montaigne* was bought for the Museum, and 1852. The author of the deception, no doubt, sought to extend the local *provenance*. Another attempt consisted in endeavouring to provide the poet with a Bible; and some years since a copy of the authorized version with his name, similarly modelled on the 1603 volume, was offered for sale.

spelling by design or accident, as in the third edition, 1612, we have *Shakespeare*—the reading of most of the quartos. But in the local register, and in documents, the form *Shaksperc* prevails. There was an ostensible forward movement even at Stratford, among men of business and more or less culture, in the present direction toward the latter part of the sixteenth century; but the other sex did not participate in the advantage, if we may judge from the ladies at New Place. Such persons as the Quineys and Greene, the notary and town clerk, rose above the normal bucolic standard, and Greene, as we perceive, went so far as to launch a volume of verse. We are enabled to judge to some extent by what method boys were initiated at schools, such as that at Stratford, into the art of calligraphy; for copy-books exist of the poet's time, containing examples for the use of pupils. The earliest which has fallen under my personal notice is dated 1591; and some of its illustrations tempt us to suspect where a certain Stratford scholar learned to form his hand.

Of letters written by the poet there is not a vestige. Those addressed to him are represented by an unit—the note from Richard Quiney. But of course he sent or received hundreds in the course of his busy and many-sided life, and there is even a disposition to credit the tradition that James I. expressed in writing certain gracious sentiments toward one, whose creations must have so often delighted him and his consort. Lintot, who republished the Poems in 1710 as an appendix to Rowe's edition of the Plays, describes it, however, as then *lost*, although from a communication from Oldys to Lintot, noticed by Mr. Fleay, it appears that the letter, subsequently to Davenant's time, came into the hands of John Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire, who survived till 1720. O, to have seen James committing the lines to paper, and the recipient scanning them, when he had broken the seal! "I cannot," Lintot says, "omit inserting a passage of Mr. Shakespeare's Life, very much to his Honour, and very remarkable, which was either unknown or

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forgotten by the Writer of it [prefixed to Rowe's edition]. That most learn'd Prince and great Patron of Learning, King James the First, was pleas'd with his own Hand¹ to write an amicable Letter to Mr. Shakespeare; which Letter, tho' now lost, remain'd long in the hands of Sir William Davenant, as a credible Person now living can testify." The loss of such a letter seems not only to bespeak an absence of appreciation and sensibility on the part of the family in the first instance, yet in complete unison with what we otherwise know, but a still more culpable and amazing stupidity and negligence in those, into whose hands it is described as having subsequently fallen. There was the double and common interest of the writer and the recipient. Of the date and precise tenor we learn nothing. I place it between 1605 and 1612. On the other hand, since we hold the flimsy morsel of paper, on which the Quiney note of 1598 was written, and the royal communication long survived the man, to whom it had been addressed, are we to conclude that both were sent to Shakespear at his London residence, and were never seen by the folks at home? During more than a century after the poet's death they were lying somewhere in the metropolis, and the letter of James eventually became the property of Davenant.

When James Cook the surgeon, who is described in 1679 as in his sixty-fourth year, was at Stratford in 1643, in medical attendance on the troops temporarily quartered there, he saw Mrs. Hall, who shewed him MSS., not of her father, but of her husband, Master Doctor Hall, "*medicus peritissimus*." Whether there were any papers of Shakespear at New Place then, no one can say. The original copies of the plays may not have survived their writer for a reason elsewhere offered; the folio of 1623 was not published till

¹ There is that other highly curious case, where in 1603 the King similarly sent from Wilton an autograph warrant to the High Sheriff of Hampshire to suspend, till his farther pleasure was known, the execution of three political offenders on the ground, that it was the first year of his reign. This document is of unique character and interest.

after the widow's death; nor is it easy to tell, whether such printed books as the poet possessed were kept in London or in the country. Betterton the actor (1635-1710), who paid a visit to Stratford not long after Cook, in search of information, appears to have come away equally empty-handed. The advanced Shakespearean student of the twentieth century is far better versed in these matters than the majority of those, who had stood, as it were, at Shakespear's side.

The more than presumable ignorance of his literary productions—more especially his early lyrics, so redolent of passion and so suggestive of disloyalty—on the part of his wife, if not of his private circle generally, raises the larger question whether the immediate connections of distinguished writers have not, as a rule, failed to sympathize with works, which to the rest of the world have been an object of the deepest, even of idolatrous, admiration. It is likely to have been the case with such authors as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Montaigne, no less than with our poet. There was of necessity the vague knowledge that they had done certain things, and there was the clearer feeling that those things had rendered them famous; but as the wife of Shakespear probably never read a line of any poem or play penned by her husband, it is almost more certain that the contents of the *Essays* were a sealed book to Mademoiselle de Montaigne. Both alike took for granted the world's verdict; and in the latter instance, certainly, it was as well that it was so, looking at some of the confidential allusions which meet the eye here and there. Yet had Mistress Shakespear been questioned as to the Sonnets and their story, it is more than doubtful if that lady would have had any information to offer. Did Chaucer shew the *Canterbury Tales* to his wife? Did the eyes of Laura fall on any of the Sonnets of Petrarch?

In strict truth the parallel with Montaigne is an imperfect and unjust one; for although his wife and daughter might have been unaware of the exact value and interest of

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his writings, they were conscious of his distinguished rank as a scholar, and cordially seconded the editorial labours of Mademoiselle de Gournay. More even than that, for the widow deposited one of the annotated copies of the edition of 1588 in the public library at Bordeaux, to be a lasting memorial of the departed.

So far as Shakespear is concerned, we have ever to keep before us his constitutional indifference to his work and his fame, and, so far as gift-copies of his Poems or Plays go, a diffidence of the appreciation of his genius by his contemporaries, or an unconsciousness by them of the supreme value to be set hereafter on such memorials. Whether the poet ever presented any of his books to those about him, or the latter theirs to him, we know not. It might at least have been expected that the copies of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* dedicated to Lord Southampton¹ would have been preserved in the hands of descendants.

The almost total disappearance of Shakespear MSS. of any kind is traceable to several agencies, of which the foremost were fires, accident, neglect. The Globe was consumed in 1613, when a large accumulation of documents, correspondence, plays, and other archives had had ample time to

¹ Thomas Wriothesley, last Earl of Southampton, who died in 1607 without issue, is described by Andrew Pennicooke the actor in a dedication to him of the *Sun's Darling*, 1656, as a personage who appreciated literature. It is to be feared that after his death the family effects were scattered, and any books and papers (including perhaps letters of the poet and the copies of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* dedicated to his father) lost. I am consequently led to annex the signature of the Earl, whom Shakespear knew and addressed, to the letter from him to Hicks of June, 1592, already cited, as the handwriting probably resembled that which we might expect to find attached to one thanking the poet for a copy of the *Venus and Adonis* in the succeeding year.

H. Southampton

form. There were periodical conflagrations at Stratford—of some of which we do not hear, others sufficiently destructive and ruinous to attract official notice. Accident and neglect are capable, where no importance is attached to property, of accomplishing any prodigies. The poet himself is figured by me as a man, who discerned in a book nothing beyond literary material, thrown aside, if it was barren of fruit, or when it had yielded such fruit as it might have; and so it fared *a fortiori* with letters, when the subject-matter had been dismissed, and with plays, which proved impracticable, and for which the writers failed to apply. A solution of the evanescence of all the dramatic work of Shakespear himself in an autograph shape seems to lie in the simple fact, that it was delivered to scribes for transcription, and then deliberately destroyed.

The failure to recover such now priceless treasures as MSS., letters and presentation-copies, is so far from being restricted to Shakespear, that it is a general incidence, and the occasional exceptions really prove the rule. Of how few of our literary glories have we heirlooms in the shape of papers on which their very eye and hand have once rested! There is the possibility, that the poet entertained a dislike to epistolary correspondence. When he made a complaint to a friend about a liberty taken with his name, it was a verbal one, and Greene, who transacted a good deal of business on his behalf, seems always to have received his oral instructions.

Yet, so long as we at present have under our eyes a miraculous, albeit distorted, glimpse of John Shakespear in a MS. commonplace-book, the copy of Gascoigne, which belonged to Gabriel Harvey, and those of Spenser which belonged to Drayton and Dryden, with their MSS. notes, need we despair?—more especially regarding such unhopèd-for recoveries as the Letters of Harvey, Jonson, and Chapman, however in themselves insignificant, the revolutionary biographical particulars, throwing an entirely fresh light on

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Spenser's early life,¹ and the Poems of James I., which lay two or three centuries at Oxford unrecognized. It may be the lot of literary mineralogists to achieve yet greater things, and how often the ore has been found to lie only a spade deep, awaiting the supreme moment, when it is to be transformed by alchemical eyes from inarticulate lumber in loft or charter-chest into solid and proud documentary vouchers!

Of other William Shakespears of or about the time of the poet no calligraphic monuments appear to have been produced.² They might have been esteemed of slight worth; their absence renders that of efforts in penmanship by their greater namesake less unintelligible, while the omission to preserve even such correspondence as may or must have passed between Shakespear and some of his more distant connections and friends is easily imputable to an unconsciousness of its ulterior estimation.

The corruptions in the early impressions of the plays may on the present supposition be carried farther back than the original typographer. The fault lay with the unintelligible MSS. and the failure even of an experienced copyist to decipher certain words or sentences. Let us reflect on the uncertainty as to mere signatures of the poet and on the different conclusions upon the exact letters traced by his hand, and then let us imagine a quire or two of paper occupied by writing of the same type, with the added features of correction and interlineation. The inference can only be, that no holograph MSS. survived Shakespear, or even survived the date of their conversion by a member

¹ This precious information was first derived by me from a volume of tracts, formerly the property of Gabriel Harvey, of which one was a gift from Spenser, at that time (1578), as Harvey tells us on the title, secretary to Dr. Young, Bishop of Rochester, his old principal at Pembroke Hall. A portion of the MS. commonplace-book of Harvey has also passed through my hands, and from it I printed a poem called *A View or Spectacle of Vanity*, 1884, in my *Inedited Poetical Miscellanies*, 1870.

² Comp. pp. 4 and 100.

of the Scriveners' Gild into legible characters, of which the actors could make use. It is extremely probable that the Poems and Sonnets, produced in the decade 1593-1603, were derived, on the contrary, from the autographs; but it is equally so that they were not preserved; and the fire at the Globe in 1613, after the retirement to Stratford, or the indifference of the family, when he died, to personal memorials, may be accountable for the absence of letters, in the present case, as one may fancy, more likely to have accumulated from the long and systematic abode of the poet at a distance from relations and neighbours.

Shakespear used the Court, not the Italian, style, and his manuscript copy must have so much the more demanded the assistance of the scrivener, whose special aptitude was the conversion of papers in the former character into fair copy for official or other practical purposes. An experienced member of the Scriveners' Gild would have succeeded, as a rule, in deciphering the holograph of the poet, which more or less resembled the characters habitually committed to him for transliteration, and would have carried it from the theatre or lodging to his office for treatment; and it is tolerably easy to see, on the one hand, how useless to the actors and prompter the original was likely to be, and how its destruction, if not instantaneous, was merely a question of time.

The dramatist was thoroughly acquainted with the province and place of the scrivener, his wide range of duties, and his corporate responsibility. In *Richard III.*, iii. 6, he makes one enter with a fair copy of the indictment of Lord Hastings:—

“ Here is the indictment of the good lord Hastings,
Which in a set hand fairly is engross'd,
That it may be to-day read o'er in Paul's;
And mark how well the sequel hangs together:
Eleven hours I have spent to write it over,
For yesternight by Catesby was it sent me;
The precedent was full as long a doing;
And yet within these five hours Hastings liv'd.—”

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Such a character as is here portrayed, who had his prototype in Adam the scrivener of Chaucerian fame, may have had hundreds of folios of Shakespear's own writing to copy "in a set hand fairly engross'd"; and when the original was thus superseded, it was, it may be more than feared, cast away as useless. Edward Alleyn is shown to have employed in this capacity Henry Underwood, whom Collier plausibly suggests to have been related to John Underwood the actor. The scarcity of Bacon holograph matter admits a similar solution. He had a staff of copyists. In his case rough drafts were possibly used in dictating to a proficient amanuensis the fair copy.

At the end of the *Three Ladies of London*, by R. W., 1584, occurs the name of an actor, Paul Buck, as if he had undertaken the transcription of the original MS. for the purpose of performance, as a voucher of accuracy to the printer. This is a solitary record, but it may have been the course pursued in other cases. The foot of Hercules has so often to answer for himself in obscure researches.

In a note in an early MS. copy of Fletcher's *Bonduca*, to account for an imperfection in the text, it is said that "the occasion why these [scenes] are wanting here, the booke whereby it was first Acted from is lost: and this hath been transcribed from the fowle papers of the Authors wh. were found." The sole regret may be deemed to be, that we have not hitherto met with any such of Shakespear. In my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, a piece called the *Four Sons of Aymon* is cited under 1624 as not being in a legible hand. The author had not taken the useful precaution to have it engrossed. As late as 1688 at all events the practice of sending MSS. to the scrivener for transcription continued, as we see from the Advertisement to the second edition of the *Lady's New Year's Gift*; and we also find that even the scrivener was liable to error. This last point carries its Shakespearian moral.

CHAPTER VII

Shakespear's relatives, friends and professional acquaintances—The circle at Stratford, in Shoreditch, the Borough, and Blackfriars—Suburban associations—Peculiar interest of the outskirts of London in those days—THE FAMILY—John Shakespear—Some particulars of Anne Shakespear, the poet's wife—Unhappy connubial relations—A lost likeness of her—Lineal descendants of the poet—John Hall—Joan Shakespear—Thomas Greene—THE FRIENDS—The Burbages—Richard Burbage the original Hamlet—Richard Tarlton, the Yorick of *Hamlet*—The Combes—Henry Field the tanner—Julius Shaw—Robert Harvard—Henry Chettle—Davenants of Oxford—Interesting circumstances connected with them—Likenesses of the poet—His personal effects—Considerations on the state of the biography.

WHEN we proceed to rehabilitate Shakespear's London and almost his England, and to reassemble the men and women, who were akin to him in various degrees and ways, or whom he more or less intimately knew, it is no inconsiderable circle, which we have the need and the power of summoning. Apart from the parents, the brothers and sisters and other immediate relatives, and the wife and children, there were the Hathaways, the Ardens, the Burbages of Shoreditch, Blackfriars and Fulham, the Halls, the Quineys who intermarried with the Shakespears, the Sadlers, who intermarried with the Quineys, the Lamberts, the Walkers, who had connections at Fyfield in Essex, and to whose son¹ Shakespear was godfather, the Harts who, again, intermarried with the Shakespears, the Nashes, the Combes, the Fields, the Shaws, and the Greenes, to whom we have to add the Davenants of Oxford. These folks offered a powerful contrast, on the whole, to the friends and acquaintances, whom the poet had gathered round him in London, and of whom some were associated with him in a purely pro-

¹ He survived at Stratford till 1680.

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fessional capacity, while there were, occupying special ground, the Warwickshire fellow-settlers, who had made the metropolis their permanent and exclusive home: the two Burbages, Richard Field the printer, and John Sadler the druggist, of whose family one had stood sponsor to the poet's son. Outside all these were the early Shoreditch and Borough, and even Blackfriars, comrades and fellows, among whom for a brief term was Richard Tarlton, who (as well as Richard Burbage) resided and died in Shoreditch, as did George Wilkins, author of many dramatic and other writings of merit and interest; Peele the dramatist, whom we find in earlier life a lodger on Bankside,¹ the elder Harvard, Augustine Phillips the playwright, nay, down to 1607, the poet's own younger brother Edmund.

Shoreditch, Blackfriars, Wapping, and the Borough constituted the theatrical headquarters in Elizabethan and Jacobean times. In those districts, which at present exhibit few and faint traces of their former condition and importance, many of the most distinguished and popular members of the profession lived and died. Shoreditch² and Southwark alike were in those days by no means unpleasant places of abode; they were still fairly open, and beyond lay an unbroken view of the country; and it was here and hereabout that Shakespear spent much of his time in labour so fruitful for him and more so perchance for us, or among the friends, the Burbages, Tarlton, and others, whom he met on his first visit to the great city. But the Borough was in those days a favourite resort of other than theatrical residents in the metropolis. It was a haunt in general vogue, perhaps for quiet, perhaps for cheapness. John Florio spent much of his life in Shoe Lane, and Joshua Sylvester, the merchant-adventurer, poet, and translator, in St. Bartholomew the Less.

¹ *Old English Jest Books*, 1864. ii. 286.

² The 34-5 Henry VIII. c. 12, conclusively establishes that in 1543 even many of the streets and lanes between Shoreditch on the East and the Strand were almost impassable. Macaulay, in his *History of England*, draws a picture of the state of the thoroughfare even between London and Kensington in the days of William and Mary.

In order to form for ourselves a more accurate idea and picture of the Blackfriars, which daily during several years passed under Shakespear's observation, and which he trod, we have to restore that ancient and historical area, with the result that we find the poet moving in a rich residential locality, where personages of rank and fortune had their houses and grounds. There were the Hunsdons, the Russells, at whose house Queen Elizabeth attended a marriage in 1600, Sir Robert Cotton, Lord Cobham, the Earl and Countess of Somerset, Lord Aubigny, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and Edward Banister of Idworth in Hampshire (the great collector of antiquities). From 1607 to 1615, Benjamin Jonson had quarters somewhere hereabout, and at a rather earlier date Geoffrey Fenton, translator of Guicciardini, had his chamber here: he had removed a little later to a lodging near the Tower. It was, in short, alike anterior to the time of the poet, and subsequently, the resort and home of a succession of distinguished names in literature and art, and Shakespear was therefore in excellent company. Then in the Inner Temple, close by, there was Selden, who counted among his intimates Jonson, Drayton and Browne, and Heywood, of whose relations with him we should have had no knowledge in the absence of a fortuitous incident, so that, had he elected to settle here, he would have found himself in fairly appreciative society, while in the City proper noblemen had their mansion-houses and men of letters their apartments.

Even without retaining the Walker premises in their entirety it would have been in perfect accord with contemporary usage alike in town and country, had Shakespear arranged to reserve an apartment for his occasional occupation, when he visited London, nor do we actually know that toward the end of his professional life, after his acquisition of the Blackfriars property, either that he did not lodge there, or that he did not pay one or two temporary visits to the metropolis after his removal to Stratford. He was possibly there under such circumstances, when

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the Rutland episode and the royal marriage occurred in 1613.

The property is described in the extant conveyance as abutting on a street (Puddle Dock Hill) leading to Puddle Dock or Wharf, and does not appear to have occupied a large area. A part of the more or less shallow tenement was over a gateway opening into premises belonging to others.

A practice had arisen in the Elizabethan time of resorting temporarily or otherwise to certain outskirts beyond the urban precincts and the bills of mortality; and one of the motives for this new departure was the periodical recurrence of the plague, as the population increased, and no adequate sanitary precautions existed. An usage, at first provisional, gradually developed into the hire of country lodgings, or even houses, and the villages round London furnished occasional, nay, even sometimes permanent, residences for a large number of literary and theatrical celebrities belonging to the set which Shakespear actually knew, or to their immediate successors under the earlier Stuarts. There certainly appears to have been a predilection for the western side of the metropolis in former times, as there has been in our own, even where original residents in the city itself might have been supposed to find places of agreeable retirement in other directions.

We are able to trace literary men, actors, managers, and unprofessional persons, at Dulwich, Fulham, North-End, Walham Green, Parson's Green, and Mortlake, and we are at liberty to surmise that the poet was in the habit of finding his way hither at intervals of leisure or on emergencies; but we have, with contemporary records at our elbow, to remember that the opposite extremities of London were practically far more remote from each other than they became in course of time by favour of good roads and better means of transit. As we con over the list of names, which occur as those of residents or lodgers in these delightful retreats in the old days, we are almost precluded from refusing to believe, that the ground within these limits was often pressed by the

fect of Shakespear—pressed too, when he was at the height of his reputation as a man of genius and substance. Some of his acquaintances settled in those parts at a later date; others remained only for a season, having quitted the town to avoid the ravages of the plague at successive intervals; and the latter contingency brings to the front in a rather new light an episode connected with the earlier career of the poet to be hereafter noticed. There was Robert Burbage¹ at North-End, where, moreover, master William Plumble, Esquire, must have received his nephew Joshua Sylvester in or about 1592, when he dedicated to him one of his translations from *Du Bartas*:² John Florio and Henry Condell at Fulham: Sir Thomas Bodley at Parson's Green (from 1605 to 1613, when he died there): John Norden the topographer, at Waltham Green (in 1596), and at Mortlake, Augustine Phillips, Shakespear's fellow-actor.³ Fulham from 1594 to 1596 offered the additional interest of having at the Palace Dr. Richard Fletcher, father of the better-recollected playwright and member of a family remarkable for culture. Certain among these arrived at a point of time too advanced to allow us to associate them with any circle, in which Shakespear might have mixed as an occasional visitor; but the particulars vouchsafed to us by accident are necessarily imperfect, and here we are clearly at any rate on classic ground. I am personally disposed, so far as Phillips the actor is concerned, to think that the intercourse between the poet and him was principally in Southwark, where Phillips

¹ *Vide supra*.

² A house once belonging to the Plumbees formerly existed in Fulham Fields. Croker, *Walk from London to Fulham*, 1860, p. 197.

³ Letter to the writer from Mr. Eustace Anderson, Clerk to the Barnes and Mortlake District Council, 27 Nov. 1899. The house of Phillips, with six acres of land, was on the north side of Mortlake Green on the site of Lancing Terrace and the buildings in the rear, as well as the house lately occupied by Charles Phillips the brewer. The ground had once been partly or wholly occupied by the moated palace of the Archbishops of Canterbury. In 1609 Robert Armin the actor printed his play, the *Two Maids of More-Clacke*, a localization which his knowledge of the suburb through Augustine Phillips may have prompted.

was living in 1602, and was thus Shakespear's neighbour. For when he settled at Mortlake, his health appears to have declined, and if his friend visited him there, it was a considerable distance in those days, and must have been, when the actor could not move far from home.

Besides its cottages and lodgings adapted to the wants of residents, Fulham had its inns, of which the Golden Lion was the most famous and splendid; but in the days of the poet this was probably a private mansion, which was subsequently converted to another purpose, as Holcroft, within living memory a private house, had been, on the contrary, a place of public entertainment—not impossibly the leading one in the village, and the most probable resort of Shakespear in 1593, when the Borough may have become unsafe during the prevailing plague, unless he availed himself of the friendly roof of the Burbages at North-End. Of those persons of note, who once inhabited the place, both Florio and Condell were later comers, neither seeming to have retired hither before 1619, when Shakespear had been long dead, and indeed Condell almost inferribly did not reside there till 1625,¹ and perhaps took refuge in the place from the ravages of the plague, which had then broken out in London, as Shakespear, I apprehend, had done years before. Yet the great dramatist undoubtedly knew both at an anterior period—Florio, when he lived in Shoe Lane or in St. Clement Danes. We are not entitled to suppose that we enjoy much conversance with the personal relations between Shakespear and Florio; but the latter was a man likely to have been drawn into service by the poet, where Italian customs and phraseology entered into the business of a piece before him. He is thought to have caricatured the lexicographer and teacher in Holofernes;² the lexicographer

¹ A tract entitled: *The Run-awayes Answer to a Booke called A Rodde for Runne-awayes*, 1625, is dedicated "To our Much Respected and very Worthy friend Mr. H. Condell at his Countrey-house in Fulham."

² Nothing can be more unlikely or absurd than the old hypothesis, that Shakespear meant to personate Ascham in this character. As to Florio and his last days in Bear Street, Fulham, see Férét, i. 119.

and teacher certainly included some of Shakespear's performances in his general censure of English plays as "perverted histories without decorum;" if Florio sat for Holofernes, we can be at no loss to guess which, the Italian or the Englishman, dealt the more telling stroke. So far as the name goes, it is found as a *dramatis persona* and the title of a play, before Shakespear was born,¹ and it had been familiarized by its use in Rabelais, who so denominates the pedantic tutor of Gargantua. Probably the illustrious curé of Meudon was unaware that it had been borne long before by the legendary spouse of St. Ursula of Britain.

John Shakespear, of whom we hear nothing farther in a strictly municipal sense after his apparent withdrawal from public life in 1586, but who, down to the very end, was engaged in commercial pursuits as a wool-stapler and glover and in local transactions, including personal litigation, and in the last year of his life member of a committee for advising the Corporation on certain points, died prior to September 8, 1601, on which day his interment at Stratford is registered. How long he had been ill, the immediate cause of death, and the place of burial, appear to be alike undiscoverable, nor do we hear, whether his son was a witness to his last moments. The poet is not traced to Stratford at this point of time, nor was he there in the following autumn, when he should have performed personal suit and service in the manorial court at Rowington for the small copyhold in Chapel Lane acquired in September, 1602; and we find his brother Gilbert representing him in a matter of local business—either commissioned to go down from London, where his occupation was, for the express purpose, or, which is likelier, to do what was required during a call at Stratford as a traveller for his employer in London, as the dramatist must have been just then engaged in the preparation of *Hamlet*. Nevertheless I am altogether of opinion, that Shakespear did personally attend the death-bed and interment in the autumn of 1601, travelling nearly a hundred miles to pay that final

¹ *Manual of Old English Plays*, 1892, v. *Holofernes*.

homage. In the third scene of the second act of *Henry V.* there is the passage, where Mrs. Quickly narrates the end of Falstaff; this, it is quite true, occurs in the 4^o of 1600, licensed on the 14th August in that year; but there is a singular omission, not supplied till 1623. I refer to the line or sentence most corruptly printed, till Theobald set it right in 1726, as it appears, with the assistance of a marginal note, in a copy of the quarto belonging to a "Gentleman sometime deceas'd," who proposed "tattled of green fields." I prefer *tattled* to *babbled*, the generally accepted modern reading, because it is more likely to have been misread in MS., the original text being "a table of green frieze."¹ By whom the idea of the Knight's death-bed was suggested, it is impossible to say; and it is equally uncertain to what extent the quartos were revised and completed by the poet himself, or whether some more authentic transcript was in existence, when the folio was in preparation. But the added words, so weightily improving the passage and picture, have inspired me with the suspicion, that, if the poet introduced them as an afterthought in some MS. copy unseen by us, he may have had an eye to his father, whose associations had been so peculiarly rural—more so than those of the Knight of the play, and who had died not long subsequently to the issue of the printed book. The most recent information supports the idea, that the author applied himself to the task of revision in some cases.

There is a second matter, which strikes me as having a bearing on the then quite recent loss of one of his parents, and it is the Gravedigger's Scene in *Hamlet*. The poet unquestionably had numerous opportunities of receiving impressions of such a class, yet his mind must have been deeply moved by the successive deaths within five years of his own son and the author of his being, and the second bereavement preceded, let us recollect, by a very brief term the point of time, when the composition of *Hamlet* was imminent, if the

¹ Thibault (*Notula Critica*, 1904, p. 14). See Notes to *Henry V.*

great task had not already taken some shape. A visit to the churchyard so close at hand, to view beforehand the spot, where his father was to lie, might have very well produced an interlocution of which we hold the dramatic essence.

The common voice of literary opinion has hitherto dismissed the claim of the father of Shakespear to any share in the credit for his intellectual development, and we know too little of the prior paternal ancestors to be able to judge, whether the antecedent generation betrayed any germ of the rich fruit to come to subsequent maturity in an individual of the stock, and then disappear for ever.

A recent recovery of an unexpected character, but which tantalizes and vexes us by its evident deficiency of precision, is a passage in some commonplace-book or books written between 1657 and 1663 by Dr. Plume, Archdeacon of Rochester, where he informs us that Sir John Mennis ("Little Admiral John"), the seaman and poet, once met John Shakespear in his shop, where he sold gloves, and that he (John Shakespear) was "a merry-cheek't old man," and said to him, "Will was a good honest fellow, but he daren't have crackt a jest with him att any time." We have here something like a broken statue of priceless worth; it is the sole vestige and survival of any articulate utterance on the part of the poet's parent, an unique realization of his personality. Let us see to what it probably amounts. Mennis, when the elder Shakespear died in 1601, was an infant, having been born in April 1598; John Shakespear had a wool-shop, where he doubtless may have sold gloves; and his remark about his son must have been offered about 1588, when the son had quitted home, and the father had contracted his local business, to some one, who repeated it to Mennis, from whom Plume perhaps derived the anecdote. Nor do I believe that the father described his son as "a good honest fellow," but rather as a fellow gifted with humour, more especially as the rest of the sentence, itself a piece of unconscious humour, points to Shakespear's addiction to making fun of people—but "not of *me*," Shakespear Senior is

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made to say. A diarist is apt to misstate facts either from carelessness of expression or delay in committal to writing circumstances from his own observation; but where, as in the present instance, he takes down particulars at third-hand, the liability to error gravely increases, especially since the anecdote was then regarded as of trivial consequence. This windfall is one more fold of the veil drawn back, and the sole case, where we seem to be admitted to the presence, as it were, of the man—within earshot of his voice. How the MS. reached Essex, where it was found, is uncertain; but through the Walkers of Fyfield and Stratford there was an early link between East Anglia and Warwickshire, as there was through the Ardens, and possibly through the Halls, between Warwickshire and Kent.

The entry in the Plume volume not only elucidates a little the early life of the poet, but tends, with other documentary evidence of a more absolute kind, to establish the view, that the father was a man of parts who, whatever may have been his illiteracy and his failure in business, culminating in his relinquishment of his seat on the Borough Council, retained during his whole life the confidence of his fellow-townsmen.

There would have been nothing strange in the manifestation of abnormal qualities by the Shakespears, if Thomas Becon be correct in describing the Warwickshire folk in the Epistle before his *Jewel of Joy* to the then Princess Elizabeth, as distinguished by their intellectual superiority; and all the other Stratford men, of whom we hear as early settlers in London, were remarkably successful. Then, in the mother, Mary Arden or Ardern, connected with the Kentish Ardens of Wye and Faversham, we indistinctly recognize a woman of character, whose family occupied a position superior to that of the Shakespears, and who was left at an early age to manage her own affairs. Her influence was discernibly one of blood and bent alone, and it was, as everybody is aware, far from being of an unusual nature. Mrs. Bond told Aubrey that Suckling the poet derived his vivacity and wit similarly from his mother, and that "his

father was but a dull fellow." Not so, however, altogether, for he was a man of business and a statesman, nor was it true of the father of Shakespear. The peep, which we have so newly gained behind the curtain, suggests that on both sides the dramatist enjoyed intellectual potentiality, even granting that on both sides his immediate foregoers were illiterate. For character and even genius may exist in the absence of culture and scholarship, and the poet's elder daughter, who perhaps possessed neither, is said on her monument to have had in her something of her father. We seem to have *data* of a kind for tracing back to the father the initiative of that humorous vein, which permeates the dramas, and is not absent, by way of interlude, even from the Tragedies.

It is certainly deserving of a passing notice that Shakespear, in *As You Like It*, where he is reported to have been one of the contemporary cast, has followed Lodge in christening the woodland scene the Forest of Arden, very slight traces of which can have existed in that part of Warwickshire in his day, but which was a woodland tract of considerable area in the time of the Britons. At least the tradition, however, remained; and the name was, *per se*, apt to be tempting, while the topographical question was quite a secondary one, since the excellent poet has placed a lioness in it. The guides to continental tourists must rely on a tolerable measure of credulous ignorance, when they place Shakespear's forest in Luxemburg; but they have the authority of the Rev. Joseph Hunter for it, and they are not much farther from the truth than Lodge, who placed it in the vicinity of Bordeaux! Although Lodge had visited the Continent at least twice, there is no evidence that he was personally acquainted with the Bordelais.

John Shakespear imparted to his son one characteristic feature—his ostensible and perhaps (as I have pointed out) inherited partiality for litigation, and that practical strictness and even hardness in money matters, which fructified in the case of the poet better than in that of his predecessor, and which was instrumental in earning for him, at the

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hands of Robert Greene, the trenchant sarcasm resident in the travestied sentence: "O tiger's heart wrapped in a *player's* hide!"

This sort of general factor and municipal notability was the true father of his son in one or two other less questionable respects. The latter may be taken to have derived from that source his practical temperament as an economist and a speculator in remunerative property, as well as his aptitude for accounts, nay, possibly, if the Mennis anecdote is construable in such a sense, in a sort of shrewd *bonhomie* and a bias, not widely shared at Stratford, toward the stage.

Our seeing faculty in regard to the elder Shakespear is exclusively local, and in his capacity as an officer of the borough he performed certain duties, and superintended at one period—in his son's infancy and even down to his arrival at puberty—the public accounts. Entries in the Stratford books during his discharge of this trust are in the ordinary court hand of the period, and evidently the work of a scrivener; signatures of the poet's father read *Signū Johis Shakespere*, and are attestations of the accompanying marks; and the same is to be said of an inscription by Judith. But the rudimentary characters *Jhon Shakspere* in one document may be autographic; and a similar remark applies to the signatures of Gilbert Shakespear (who wrote quite a good hand), Susanna Hall, and Lady Barnard; and I take the occasion to observe, that the writing in the case of Mrs. Hall bears a by no means distant resemblance in its type to that of Susanna Evelyn, the Diarist's daughter, who as a girl inserted her name thrice in a small volume of Prayers printed in 1659. On the calligraphy of the poet himself I have already offered my opinion.

The educational standing of the family, so far as their handwritings go, was not inferior to that of their neighbours—we may surmise, in advance of it. The diffusion of the power of tracing the name on paper was stimulated by the growing necessity, where property existed, of executing

or attesting deeds; and before people aspired to engage in correspondence, they gained sufficient dexterity with their pens to render a document valid in the eye of the law. So far as John Shakespear was concerned, he did not abandon the use of a mark to the last, nor did his wife. An immense volume of business even of a momentous class has in course of ages been transacted by persons of both sexes, who were no better clerks.

It is parcel of the anomalous relations, which subsisted during so many years between the poet and his native place, and the almost undoubted rupture with his wife, that there is no hint of Shakespear having at any point of time been even invited to fill the position in the borough, to which his social, literary, and financial pretensions so well entitled him. The extreme probability is, that, unlike his father, he entertained no taste for municipal honours, and that, when he had about 1613 permanently settled in the country, his health soon became precarious and his movements uncertain. Under any circumstances, he was a man unapt to relish parochial business, unless it directly concerned him; and then there was his cousin Greene to act for him. I elsewhere notice the probability or chance, that somewhere about 1608, when legal points were under discussion, he accompanied Greene on a visit to the muniments, and that his eye met a phrase there, which struck him, and which he utilized. Yet even there I enter a *caveat*.

It was, after all, the home life in and after 1613 down to the close of the scene, which, with its inherent want of broader sympathy, was bound to prove irksome and injurious in practical experience, whatever might have been hoped from it; and the withdrawal from the arena of his labours and his noble achievements, and the loss of nearly all congenial spirits, had a strong subsidiary share in shortening that incomparable career.

It would not have been difficult to trace the origin of the imperfect tie between Shakespear and connections by marriage of an almost puritanical turn of thought, even in

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the absence of other contributory agencies, when we contemplate the Poems and Sonnets, so luxurious and fervid in their language and sentiment, apart from their mere literary merit and occasional obscurity—at least to us. The sanctimonious disposition of his wife, on whom antenuptial recollections had operated, perhaps, differently from their influence on her husband, may be answerable for the baptismal appellations of their two daughters. The theological warp at New Place had set in, long before Dr. Hall appears on the scene. Evelyn the Diarist gave his daughter the baptismal name of the scriptural lady, whom the Elders admired under the same circumstances as David admired Bathsheba. Then as they grew up, our Susanna and Judith reading about naughty Venus and wicked King Tarquin! Such books could not be allowed to enter the house!—not even when one of them had been licensed by his Grace the Primate.

Listen to Hamlet as he addresses Ophelia (Act iii. Scene 1):—

" . . . What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth? . . . Get thee to a nunnery, go; farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them."

This is the sarcastic, self-disparaging vein, not deficient in the *Sonnets* and elsewhere. There are other very similar allusions scattered about, and the insistence is too frequent, too explicit, and even too inconsequent, where it immediately offers itself, to permit more than a single conclusion. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in the dialogue between Lysander and Hermia we get a reference to the ills arising out of disparity of years, where occurs that almost proverbial sentence: "The course of true love never did run smooth."

The wife had been barely recollected in the last dispositions of the poet, and then merely in a manner, which tends to corroborate, not the affection of her husband, but their long separation, and I take her rupture with him to have

been, as I state above, of many years' duration, and to have been forcibly present to the poet, when he effected the Blackfriars purchase in 1613, and barred her title to dower under that head. The lady was in fact left entirely dependent on freebench in the Rowington copyhold and the dower on a part of the other property: but her financial position had, even prior to her widowhood, been evidently straitened; and it seems to belong to the painful story, that a sum of 40s. advanced to her by an old servant of her father was not repaid without legal pressure. The true history of this unhappy affair is probably lost.

We are assured by tradition, that before her death in 1623 she expressed a desire to lie in the same grave with her husband; but the plan was not carried out beyond the allotment to her remains of a spot in the chancel near those of the poet; and her son-in-law Hall, who might more profitably have occupied himself in leaving us some particulars of Shakespear, composed in her honour a conventional and dull Latin epitaph, which amounts exactly to nothing. It is notable that in the entry of her burial she is signalized as *Mistress Shakespear*, in contradistinction to a second person interred on the same day, who is described as "*Anna uxor Richardi James.*" This description was the exact counterpart of the *Master* of her husband.

There is not the remotest existing clue to her personal appearance. But in an old house in Warwickshire, long since demolished, the staircase is said to have possessed terminals in the singular shape of small full-length figures of the poet and his wife. That of the latter has not come down to us; but the carved standing resemblance of Shakespear, 2 feet 3 inches high, holding a book in his hand, is still preserved.¹ It is indifferently executed, and is in a sense and a way less interesting than the companion would have been. The idea of introducing such unusual embellishments may have occurred to the builder of the mansion or

¹ On the removal of the premises in question it was acquired by a late vicar of Willoughby Waterless in Leicestershire.

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his architect, when the name of Shakespear began to revive; but the farther question arises—Whence did the sculptor obtain even an approximate notion of the lady's appearance? Possibly there was once a portrait of her, too.

Judging from an account given by the parish clerk of Stratford, in or about 1693, when all the immediate descendants of the poet were dead, the family was not liked, and Shakespear was regarded as the best—not precisely in the sense in which we should use the phrase, but as the most popular and neighbourly. Did the others stand off on the strength of the reputation and rank of the dramatist and poet, whom they did so little to encourage—much less to flatter? There seems at that time, when a renown so great and so widely diffused should have yet survived in undiminished strength, to have been a comparative forgetfulness of the only personage of note ever yielded or to be yielded by the town, if the reference to the wife as "one Mrs. Shakespear" be a fair sample of the local indifference and crassitude. Perhaps it is not; for by an odd solecism the memorandum, where the expression is used, purports to be one "of Persons Remarkable" mentioned in the Register.

It is deserving of hope that she had her share of pleasure and enjoyment within the narrow lines by which she was bounded. This shadowy character, more enigmatical than her husband, offers us barely any assistance toward an elucidation of her monotonous provincial career. She is all but inarticulate. No echoes of her voice, beyond the reputed intimation of her wish to lie beside the poet in Holy Trinity Church, have reached our ears. Nothing is known *with certainty* of her origin or place of birth, although her so-called cottage has been acquired at an extravagant price by public subscription. The poet has in no measured strains lamented his lot. He had inverted the course taken by his father. He had married a woman, not above, but below, him in station and character, although in common with his father he received with her a respectable portion; and he and his family were the sufferers. Of the lady there is a

smaller salvage even than of the daughters, who advance into the foreground and light a little here and there, if it is only to make a mark or affix a rudimentary signature on some parchment. She, who could have told us so much in the way of fact or report, descended to the grave without shedding a ray of light on her own history or on that of the man, who alone has made us remember her or care for her.

Nevertheless, by virtue of that principle of indemnity in all human affairs, what more influential factor than the wife in making the poet what he became, in developing a genius which might have lain dormant, can be imagined? If he had not been sensible of a potent motive for making London, not Stratford, his virtually permanent centre: if there had not arisen some grave domestic friction by reason of the discovery of an intrigue between Shakespear and another woman—*for*san the dark figure of the Sonnets, whom Mr. Fleay, I am afraid, rashly and wrongly identifies with the *Arise* of Willobie, or alternatively between the wife and another man—a career more satisfactory in one sense, and far less so in another, might have been that of the dramatist. He might have returned to his native town, and have succeeded his father as a provincial trader and an alderman, and that sacred spot on the Avon would have long since been buried in silence and in oblivion.

Shakespear had originally had three brothers and four sisters, of the latter of whom three died in infancy or early life. The poet was the third child, but the eldest son. There were two daughters successively christened Joan, born in 1558 and 1569. The survivor, to whom the poet was evidently much attached, married a Hart. Of the brothers, Edmund died in 1607, in the December of the year, in which Susanna Shakespear had been married in the June, Richard in 1613. Of the career of Gilbert, born in 1566, we hold the information, that he carried on during the better portion of his life the business of a haberdasher in London, that he enjoyed the confidence of his brother, and that a namesake, described as *adolescens*, died at Stratford

in 1612. The individual so specified has been taken to have been a natural son. Malone was of opinion, that the father had predeceased him; at all events in the will, where the surviving sister Joan is a considerable beneficiary, Gilbert the Elder is not mentioned. Whether or not the burial entry of 1612 pointed to some local scandal, he not improbably passed his last days in London among his associates there. It has been mentioned that, in the choice of a calling, he had partly followed in his father's steps, and was possibly assistant to him at Stratford, when the crisis arrived in 1586, being then a youth of twenty, and that he naturally sought in London a similar class of duties. It is thought that he did not open business on his own account, but acted as assistant in one of the flourishing establishments of the kind at that time in Cheapside and the Poultry, and from the fact, that he is occasionally found at the native place in subsequent years, I should be disposed to infer, that he, as we now have it, travelled for his firm, and may have supplied the shops in Stratford—even his father's during some years—with all sorts of haberdashery.

Edmund Shakespear had probably followed his brother William to London, and adopted the stage as his profession. His name will occur again; but our knowledge of his career is fractional.

The lineal descendants of the poet embraced the families of Hall, Quiney, Nash, Barnard, and Hart, of whom the last still remained on the spot till 1806. Judith, wife of Thomas Quiney the vintner, survived her elder sister, her own husband, and her own children, and died in 1662. Quiney, who died in London in 1652, not long after quitting Stratford in embarrassed circumstances, had carried on business in his native town, where his predecessors had long enjoyed a character for respectability, from the date of his marriage in 1616 till his death, at a house called the Cage in Stratford High Street, and had not quite justified the distrust of his father-in-law evinced in the poet's last dispositions. The unsettled state of public affairs under the

Commonwealth naturally affected such a trade as his; but in his brother Richard, a successful London grocer, he found a friend, and presumably resided with him to the end.

Susanna had died in 1649, leaving her rather extensive possessions to her only child Elizabeth, who married twice: first, Thomas Nash of the Inner Temple, a gentleman of some literary acquirements and a native of Stratford, whom she lost in April, 1647-8, and secondly John Barnard of Abington, Northamptonshire, who was knighted in 1661. Lady Barnard was buried at Abington in 1670. In her will she slightly remembered the Hathaways; but the Shakespear estate ultimately devolved on the representatives of John Hart. The testatrix ordered the Stratford real estate and New Place to be sold; the house in Blackfriars she had either given or sold to a relative in her life-time; and the premises perished in the Fire of 1666. She left no direct issue by either husband. In her will, 1669-70, she omits to name the man, to whom she owed all that she had to leave.

Of John Hall some particulars have already occurred. He is traced to Acton in Middlesex, where he retained a small property after his removal elsewhere; but he must have settled at Stratford very early in the seventeenth century. Acton was, at all events, somewhat later a stronghold of puritanism; and Hall carried with him to his Warwickshire home a powerful bias in that direction. There was in the time of Elizabeth a surgeon of the same name, a member of the Barber-Surgeons' Guild, and in 1565 a resident in Coleman Street, in the City of London. He was also a man of religious character, and wrote several small books of a devout complexion, besides one of a professional class. It is little more than a suggestion, in the absence of any sort of more distinct clue, that the earlier Hall may have been the father of Shakespear's son-in-law. He has been described as of Maidstone; but the local histories omit to mention his name. He was a medical man; but in the Stratford register, where his marriage to Shakespear's daughter is entered, he

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is termed John Hall *gentleman*. The resemblance in two or three points might render farther inquiry desirable, since the interest of Hall of Stratford in the New Place estate became so prominent, and it was probably from him that Susanna Shakespear imbibed her reputed piety, if he did not go so far in his acquaintance with the female members both before and after his marriage as to communicate to them his own religious tenets and prejudices. At the same time, he may be another of the rather numerous instances of families migrating from one part of England to another, or of branches establishing themselves in different and remote counties.

This man, who saw and knew so much, this dull professional expert and bigoted nonconformist, who is explicitly stated to have been most famous at Stratford, kept a notebook of cases in Latin, even including that of Drayton, and stopped short at entering his relative's, reducing his work thereby to the vicinity of waste paper.

There can have been no sympathy between the two men; there is no indication that the physician entertained even an approximate idea of the genius of his father-in-law. Men, who were infinitely better qualified to form an opinion on the subject, even such an one as Dugdale the historian of the county, formed a very imperfect one; and where this famous gentleman—Hall, not Shakespear—has occasion to refer to the poet's daughter, she is only "Mrs. Hall of Stratford my wife." There is not a hint of her relationship to somebody else. To think, when we contemplate the professional gibberish and jargon, with which he fills his volume—and Cook his translator did not give us the whole—that he did not set down a few lines, which would have been worth all the rest a million-fold! There is the faintest possibility that of Hall's MSS. memoranda, or of Cook's, other portions may yet come to light. There is this to be pleaded for the Halls, that, if Shakespear proximately succumbed as the result of some hospitable excess, they may have judged it best to hush up the matter. Of course they could not foresee

that posterity would take a different view, and not thank them.

The marriage of Joan Shakespear, the poet's sister, to a Hart of Stratford, and the failure of the biographers to trace the Harts, leads me to mention that a small liturgical MS. of the fifteenth century, sold by auction in 1903, presented marks of its ownership by William, son of Thomas Hart, of Gloucester, at a more or less posterior date. Did one of the family migrate thence? There were Harts at Tewkesbury down to the twentieth century, but some time in the eighteenth we find them at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, although the old Gloucestershire tie was not broken, for George Shakespear Hart, who died at High Wycombe in 1907, was born at Tewkesbury, and, which is more noteworthy, educated at the same grammar school as the poet—a tribute to the one and a testimony to the other.

Coming in contact with the poet in a different manner, was that Thomas Greene, who claimed the poet as a connection, while he refers to one or two other persons at Stratford in a similar way. The term was loosely applied, and amounted to no more than a kinsman. In 1571 we find a nephew calling his uncle his cousin.¹ At the same time there was not improbably some consanguinity, for in the Stratford register, under March 6, 1589-90, the interment is entered of "Thomas Green alias Shakspeare," perhaps his father. Philip Greene was one of the chamberlains in 1582, and was living in 1594. Greene, who was a brother of John Greene the popular actor, was a councillor of the Middle Temple, a notary public, and when he first occurs to notice in connection with Shakespear, held the appointment of town-

¹ Had Shakespear been consulted, he might perhaps have referred to him, as Addison did to Eustace Budgell, as "the man who calls himself my cousin." The fragmentary survival of information may be exemplified by the accidental occurrence of the name of Greene in 1603 as aforesaid, his reappearance in 1608-9, by the complete loss of trace of him till 1610-11, and our inability to determine what his precise consanguinity with the poet was.

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clerk of Stratford. In 1614 he was Steward of the borough. The poet, as we perceive, generally secured his services, when anything had to be done in his frequent and long absences from Stratford; but his cousinhood does not appear to have extended to intellectual resemblance. We have all heard of the insuperable repugnance of Shakespear himself to the composition of occasional or panegyrical tributes arising out of temporary and special circumstances, and of this being imputed to him almost as a trait of disloyalty. But as if it were in the fitness of things that some voice out of Stratford should be lifted up to hail the new Cæsar, when James I. succeeded Elizabeth in 1603, cousin Greene stepped forward, and framed a pæan, which he not too unassumingly christened *A Poet's Vision and a Prince's Glory*. The adventurous author was naturally led to place his MS. in the hands of William Leake the printer, who had ushered into the world ten years before the *Venus and Adonis*; he signalizes himself on the title as Thomas Greene Gentleman, a pretension neglected by his relative; but the publisher gives no address, and the excessive rarity of the volume favours the surmise, that it was printed at Greene's expense. It is not more foolish than other contemporary trifles of the kind, and is in rhyming hexameters. As very few eyes have beheld a copy, it may be worth while to transcribe the opening lines:--

" When Hesperus, the Harbinger of night,
Had iustly ordred eu'rie burning light,
My solitary chamber I forsooke,
And musing went vnto a pleasant brooke;
Where, sitting down vpon a hillocke by,
To steale delight with a more quiet eye,
Soft drizzling droppes vpon my face did fall,
Which sweeter were then that wee Nectar call "

What did cousin Shakespear think of this glorious effusion? One would have liked to have his private valuation. Did it stir his risible muscles? Or did he commend cousin

Greene as a bard of promise, who might at last shed a lustre on the family? Of one point one may be sure: the title was the author's own inspiration. Anyhow cousin Greene was not discouraged from sacrificing a second time to the Muses: for, two years later, we see him sit down to indite a copy of verses to accompany their common friend Drayton's Poems on their first appearance in a collective shape.

Greene, however, independently of his poetical leaning, imbibed from intercourse with Shakespear, Drayton, and others, may be fairly presumed to have been of essential service to the poet in a practical way, and their friendship was, no doubt, of life-long duration. He is the sole individual, resident at Stratford itself, of whom we hear as possessing qualifications for representing anyone in the nature of a client. In 1602, in the absence of Shakespear, the conveyance of the purchase from the Combes was delivered to his brother Gilbert to his use, almost as if Greene had not yet appeared on the scene.

Almost in the first rank of those outside the actual family circle, whom the dramatist had reason to regard with affection and respect, were the Burbages,¹ similarly emigrants from Stratford to the metropolis in the person of James Burbage, of whose local or provincial antecedents we know next to nothing, and who first presents himself to our notice in 1576 as a man in prosperous circumstances, who had more

¹ In a Bible (Barker, 4^o. 1588), now sadly mutilated, there are a few MSS. memoranda referring to Burbages of the sixteenth century, but apparently not of the Stratford branch. There are on the title of the New Testament and on the back of the leaf: "Agnes Burbage the wyfe of Thomas Burbage was buried the vi day of february 1592. Thomas Burbage the sonn of William Burbage was baptised the thxxvii daye of November in the yeare of our lord god 1594. Agnes Burbage the daughter of William Burbage was Baptised the thxxv day of Aprill 1598. Darathie was Baptised the thxxix daye of August 1602. John Burbage the sonn of William Burbage was Baptised the thxvi daye of June in the yeare of our lord god 1605."

Shakespear's Burbages remained in the neighbourhood of Fulham till the eighteenth century. In 1727 Millicent Burbage was married to John Dwight, son of the vicar of that village. *Fàret, Fulham*, 1900, ii. 36.

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than reached middle life. One hesitates to associate with this Warwickshire branch any provincial records of the same period, since there appear to have been Burbages in several parts of England about this time, except that the identity of the armorial bearings of those, whom the poet so well knew, and those of North-End, near Fulham, seems to establish a kindred. It is just worth mentioning that a very fine copy of the *Spider and the Fly*, by John Heywood, 1556, is before me, bearing on the title, in a firm and well-formed hand, the coeval autograph of an otherwise unrecorded *Ninian Burbage*; and the ostensible residence of the family of the hosteler in London, taken with his leaning to theatrical, if not literary matters, makes it at least more probable that this book belonged to the same stock than to any settled in the provinces.

Richard Burbage, who died (of paralysis, as it is fairly supposed) on Saturday, March 13, 1618-19, in Lent, probably in easy circumstances, unless he had been a serious loser from the Globe fire in 1613, was, no doubt, a greater actor than the man whose work he so importantly contributed to illustrate by his histrionic gifts; and his co-operation, as Collier long since suggested, may have beneficially operated on the dramatist. Collier farther believed, that the actor's son William, born about six months after Shakespear's death, was not improbably named after his father's life-long friend. Burbage took the leadership in *Richard III.*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*, and played Hieronimo in Kyd's piece of that name. He was the original Hamlet, while his great friend the author, according to tradition, contented himself by playing the Ghost. But there is some ground for the belief, that the dramatist, though, maybe, less capable of the actual impersonation, directly instructed Burbage in the way in which he desired the leading part to be interpreted. As a bare possibility he may at first have made an essay toward taking it himself. From the pen of a contemporary play-goer we obtain an almost unique glimpse of Burbage, as he trod the boards at the Globe. After reciting some

of the characters which he portrayed, the writer proceeds to say:—

“ Oft have I seen him leap into the grave,
Suing the person which he seem'd to have
Of a sad lover, with so true an eye,
That there I would have sworn he meant to die ;
Oft have I seen him play this part in jest
So lively, that spectators and the rest
Of his sad crew, whilst he but seemed to bleed,
Amaz'd, thought even then he died indeed—”

A very peculiar interest is attached to the Burbage family, and to this member of it in particular, inasmuch as he was during so long a course of years face to face with Shakespear, and was his first great interpreter. His father, his brother Cuthbert and himself, laid the dramatist under weightier obligations than we are ever perhaps to realize in lending him aid and encouragement on his first experience of metropolitan and theatrical life. There is no evidence that between him and Alleyn or Henslowe the relations were ever close or considerable. The author of the above-quoted lines had possibly not seen him in *Richard III.*, which is so far remarkable, that it was one of his most striking studies—one, with which he, according to the story, thoroughly imbued himself. He was collaterally a painter—probably as an occasional recreation. He executed a bold and fine head of himself and one (as I surmise) of his fellow-actor William Sly, both at present in the Dulwich Gallery; and I shall have farther occasion to introduce him in this capacity.

At the period of the decease of the younger Burbage, Richard Corbet, afterward a bishop, but better and more deservedly known as a writer of some creditable verse and as a man of amiable character, was thirty-seven years of age, having been born near London in 1582; and it is a valuable corroboration of the testimony to the excellence of the actor, especially in *Richard III.*, which Corbet may very well have had an opportunity of personally testing, that in one of his poems he tells us that an innkeeper, referring to Richard in

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the play, spoke of him as *Burbage*. So thorough were the identification and illusion.

There is far more than a possibility, as will be hereafter mentioned, that Burbage and Shakespear met at Stratford in 1616 just prior to the death of the poet.

Side by side with the Burbages, and influencing Shakespear in a different manner and direction, was a man, of whose brief association with the dramatist some account has already been afforded. Richard Tarlton, whose name we find indifferently spelled Tarrelton and Torrelton, and of whose impressive personal character and unexampled popularity the most abundant and varied evidence from individuals in manifold lines of experience and taste remains to us,¹ is held by Fuller to have been born at Condover in Shropshire, and to have been originally a swineherd. He was brought under the notice of Dudley, Earl of Leicester, by one of the Earl's dependents, who was struck by his idiosyncrasy, and Leicester was immediately instrumental in his introduction to London life. His earliest occupation is stated to have been as a water-bearer; but his comic faculty drew him toward the theatre, and he took the part of the clown in the *Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, a drama, which may be suspected of having been placed on the stage prior to the usually assigned date—about 1585, since in 1588 Tarlton was sworn one of the Queen's players. The precise date of his first arrival in London is wholly uncertain; but it cannot well have been later than 1565, because in 1570 his name appears as the author of one or two ballads on temporary topics, and in 1576 and 1578 he produced his *Toys* and his *Tragical Treatises*. But much of his fugitive literary work has perished, while much, which bears his name, was from concealed pens. His *Jests* were not published in his lifetime, nor did they contain all the matter, which might have been collected from living witnesses. Yet they supply us with interesting indications of his career and sur-

¹ See my Notices of Tarlton from different sources in *Old English Jest Books*, ii. 254-60.

roundings, of his experiences as a tavern-keeper at Colchester and in London, of his election to a municipal office in his ward, and of his extensive provincial tours. He was a person in universal acceptance among all grades from the Queen and her Court down to the lowest and least reputable members of the community, and toleration of his "happy-unhappy sayings" seems to have been an understood matter, till at last, as it is said, Elizabeth forbade his farther presence before her at supper.

The life of this most eminent and remarkable man was probably a brief and checkered one, and he died on the 5th September, 1588, of the plague at his lodgings in Shoreditch, and was interred at St. Leonard's Church the same day. He had led a dissipated and thriftless course, and died poor. There has been a disposition to regard him as uneducated; but natural talent or genius must have gone far to make up for shortcomings in learning and culture; he was manifestly a man of versatile acquirements and an expert fencer; nor is there any valid reason to deny him the authorship of several of the publications, to which his name was attached in his lifetime, including the two-part play of the *Seven Deadly Sins*, attributed to 1585-6, in connection with which there is that highly significant anecdote of the meeting between the author and Gabriel Harvey at Oxford, when Tarlton invited him to come and see his performance on his return to London, and the distinguished comedian, challenged by Harvey on an inconsistency between his personal and theatrical identity, replied that he was "of Dr. Perne's religion."¹ The portraits, which have descended to us, strike one as mere caricatures, as snap-shots caught in the act of grimace.

Of his literary legacy to us his *Tragical Treatises*, 1578, of which only one part has so far been regained, seems the most important; and it is a volume of a slender Shakespearean relevance, where we find a precedent for the use of the unusual phrase "Thrasonical" which occurs in *Love's Labor's*

¹ *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, p. 206; *Old English Jest Books*, ii. 250.

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Lost, 1598. Shakespear had cast his eye over the pamphlet of the acquaintance of his youth, and had not hesitated to borrow what he found suitable for one of his first independent dramatic essays—in this particular instance a mere striking expression. But he had had, too, under his eye, when he penned that passage in *Twelfth Night*, iii. 4, the ballad by Tarlton,

“ The crow sits upon the wall.
Please one, and please all.”

And there is in the same play a farther trace of the influence of the famous comedian, where Longueville and Katharine hold the dialogue on veal and calf—not a very witty or a very delicate one to our apprehension—if the anecdote, reported of Tarlton in one of the Ashmole MSS., be genuine; and there is the slightest possible reason to doubt it in the face of others even of a more unrestrained vein. These equivoques pervade not only the dramatic series, but the entire range of our older literature.¹

When Shakespear undertook to treat the reign of Henry V. as a part of his historical series, he found a kind of groundwork in the *Famous Victories*, in which his old friend had taken the part of the clown before 1585 at the Bull in Bishopsgate Street; and the drama, as it was played by the Queen's Majesty's Players, came from the press in 1598, so as to be before the poet, when he was composing his own piece. It is not perhaps material that the *Victories*² was licensed in 1594, and possibly then published. Shakespear doubtless adopted the first copy, which came to hand.

It may be that Tarlton was, as an early MS. note in a copy of Spenser, 1611, seems to suggest, rather than to state, the “pleasant Willy” of the author of the *Faëry Queen*; but

¹ Comp. p. 32 *supra*.

² As a play on this subject—probably the *Victories*—was, it appears, in course of performance at Henslowe's theatre as late as Nov. 28, 1595, the publication may have been stayed. See Halliwell-Phillips, *Outlines*, 6th ed., ii. 430, and *Old English Jest Books*, ii. 218–19, where a curious account occurs of Tarlton playing a double part through the temporary absence of the actor, who should have represented the chief justice.

I feel that those who have urged such a proposition might have considerably fortified their argument or theory, if they had mentioned the circumstance that in 1578 Spenser gave or lent to Gabriel Harvey, his intimate friend, *Scoggin's Jests*, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Skelton's *Merry Tales*, and *Howleglas*, on condition that he would read them: for this is almost tantamount to a knowledge that such humorous ephemerides were appreciable by the donor, and that he was the sort of man to relish Tarlton. This was an early period in Spenser's literary career, before even the *Shepherd's Calendar* had appeared. It is a contributory witness to the survival of Tarlton's name, that in 1605 Cyril Tourneur cites among other popular ballads the current one entitled: "The Fine Foole, to the tune of 'Tarlton,'" and a second point seems to illustrate that comedian's method, as we are told: "Here the singer pulled a paper out of his pocket, wherein was written both the dittye and the note [tune]." Such was perhaps Tarlton's own way. In the Stationers' Register under Sept. 23, 1588, occurs a ballad called "Tarlton's Farewell"; but his authorship is more than uncertain.

The Combe or Combes (as the name is spelled in the Temple Records) family was connected with the two Temples and with New Inn from the time of Henry VII. William Combes, late of New Inn, Gentleman, second son of John Combes, late of Stratford-on-Avon, Esquire, deceased, was admitted to the Middle Temple, 19 Oct. 1571. Thomas Combes was admitted in Oct. 1602, 44 Eliz., and entered the chambers of Messrs. Henry Williams and William Combes, Esq., as a Master of the Bar in expectancy, paying a fine of 40s. From the contact of the family with London and its lengthened professional career, there is the possibility of Shakespear material of some kind occurring hereafter indirectly through this channel.

There were three Combes at Stratford in Shakespear's time: John and his nephews Thomas and William; and, the uncle having predeceased the poet, the latter left his sword, which he had intended for his old friend, to Thomas as a

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kindly memento. The Combe epitaph, whatever its true history may be, can have no Shakespearean relevance beyond the possibility that the composition was mentioned or even shown to him. John Combe died in 1614, recollecting Shakespear in his will in the shape of a legacy of £5, a sum equal to £30 at least of our currency; their acquaintance had been of some duration; and there is no proof either that he was an usurer, or that the slightest difference had ever existed between the two men. That the rhyme was composed at or near the time is proved by its insertion in Richard Brathwaite's *Remains After Death*, printed in 1618; and there is an indication that a copy of it on a slip of paper was once attached to the Combe monument in the church by the rhymester himself or someone else. Who less than Shakespear would have taken up his pen for such a purpose at any period, more particularly under the known circumstances and at such a date?

All the anecdotes, which we have inherited, are traceable to posthumous recollection, which is notoriously fallible, especially where a story has descended through more than one link or line of succession; and they are all provokingly trivial. Heywood was a man, who might in his lost Account of the English Poets have very well preserved some really pertinent and illuminating facts about his personal friend; but, if the MS. should ever be recovered, we might perhaps find that he stopped short of Shakespear, as Hall did in his *Observations*.

A farther point of interest attaches itself to Thomas Combe, inasmuch as in the same year, in which Shakespear published his *Venus and Adonis* with his countryman Richard Field, a person of the same name brought out, or at least Field entered at Stationers' Hall, a little volume called *The Theatre of Fine Devices*,¹ a translation, with the engrav-

¹ The oldest and only known impression in a perfect state is dated 1614, and was found by me in a volume with other pieces among the Tixall or Burton-Constable books. There is a fragment of an earlier, perhaps the original, one.

ings reproduced, of *Le Théâtre des bons Engins*. There is slight doubt that Combe of Stratford was answerable for the book, and he may have been a second resource to the poet in the mastery of any French passage or phrase. The mere sight of the volume would have sufficed to bring before the mind of Shakespear the general principle followed in such literature, if he had not previously enjoyed an opportunity of examining a specimen, and to lead him to carry the moral farther at his pleasure. Here was a book of Emblems brought to his very door, as it were, by a young Stratford friend.

The father of Field the printer, Henry Field the tanner, had had commercial relations with John Shakespear as far back as 1556, and must have been well known to the poet; and we think of his tan-yard, when we read what the gravedigger says in *Hamlet* on the relative durability of bodies. Henry died in 1592, and John Shakespear (he is termed in one passage among the papers John Shaksper Senior) was one of the assessors of his property. With the son Shakespear does not seem to have been so intimate after 1596. Then there was Julius Shaw, a prosperous man of business as a maltster and wool-striker, and one of the witnesses to the poet's will. His house stood two doors away from Shakespear's, and is still substantially extant; some portions may date back to the time of Henry VII. It is identified with the personality and footprints of the dramatist, when he crossed the threshold to see Shaw during his later days, when Stratford had become his home. Another classical house in the town, and one also still preserved in comparative integrity, is that, which was occupied by the parents of John Harvard, Robert and Katherine Harvard, the latter a daughter of Thomas Rogers, Alderman of Stratford, and probably related to Philip Rogers, with whom Shakespear had a suit about a purchase of malt. The building was erected in 1596, and Robert Harvard was married in Holy Trinity Church in 1605. But a more pertinent circumstance is, that his son John, subsequently a settler in New England,

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was christened, not at Stratford, but at Southwark, a vicinity, with which Shakespear and his theatrical and dramatic friends were so closely associated; and the poet was not improbably domiciled there about that particular juncture, when he lost his brother Edmund.

Another name and personality, claimable as more than a casual acquaintance, is Henry Chettle, son of Robert Chettle, of the London Dyers' Gild, an eminent and successful dramatist and poet, and at one period of his life—about 1590—a printer. In 1592 he had published Greene's posthumous *Groatworth of Wit*, containing the attack on Shakespear; but almost immediately afterward he took the opportunity in a tract entitled *Kindharts Dream* of intimating his regret, more especially as he might have used his discretion in regard to the text, and testifying to the "civil demeanour" of Shakespear, his "excellence in the quality he professes, his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, which approves his art." This was high and cordial testimony from a presumed friend of Greene, and we are scarcely entitled to question its substantial sincerity. It formed a sort of keynote to the virtual eclipse of the former dramatic school by the new author. It may be a perfectly fanciful notion; but I am inclined to associate with a highly probable intimacy, perhaps improved by the just-quoted apology, between Shakespear and Chettle, the following passage in the 111th Sonnet:—

"Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand—"

Henslowe the manager was also collaterally or originally a follower of the same calling. If Chettle in later years ever resorted to the language of reproof, it was in a gentle way, when he blamed his contemporary in 1603 in not writing an elegy on Elizabeth in requital of the good offices of the queen toward him—good offices, of which one would be glad to hear more.

Between London and Stratford the poet most unquestionably had numerous acquaintances, of whom we have no trace beyond those very dear friends the Davenants of Oxford. The Crown Inn at Carfax, on or near the site of a modern house, was taken in 1604 by John Davenant, who was the father of the dramatist of that name in more than one sense, inasmuch as he possessed a taste for the theatre, and admired the plays of his occasional guest. The acquaintance of these two personages, Shakespear and the elder Davenant, was not improbably formed very shortly after the commencement of the new proprietorship of the Crown, for in 1605 one of Shakespear's Plays was performed before the Corporation of Oxford, and as it was the comparatively new tragedy of *Hamlet*, in which the author not only bore a part, but may be taken to have felt an unusual interest, and the scene of representation was so near his native place, his presence is almost as indubitable as at the commemorative exhibition of *Love's Labor's Lost* at Southampton House in 1605. The poet did not know the family till 1604 or 1605—perhaps, till he visited Oxford in the latter year. The character, which has been transmitted to us of John Davenant, father of the dramatist, and his wife, and the touching anecdote which Aubrey has handed down of the boyish attachment of their son Robert to Shakespear, unite in my judgment to warrant us in placing the relations on a footing of the purest and most cordial friendship. John Davenant, a hosteler of the Elizabethan type, was in the year of his death (1621) Mayor of Oxford, and the family maintained and even improved their social standing, and were long connected (including Aubrey's "Parson Robert," a fellow of St. John's, Oxford, and pastor of West Kingston, Wilts), with the University and the Church. We find William Davenant, M.A. of Magdalen Hall, fourth son of Sir William, a contributor in 1657 to the verses accompanying the funeral sermon of Henry Wilkinson, principal of that house, on Margaret Corbet, wife of the pastor of Hasely in the county, a lady of the most austere piety.

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The Davenants had several other children, were highly respected in Oxford, and the father and mother remained to the last on the most affectionate terms. If the poet stood sponsor to any of the children, it was surely to Robert, rather than to William. As late as 1614 he became god-father to William Walker of Stratford.

"I have heard Parson Robert say," Aubrey writes, "that Mr. W. Shakespeare has given him a hundred kisses." Kissing was more habitual in England between men at that time than at present: Erasmus was particularly struck by the fashion, when he was among us in 1499. The poet knew Davenant as a child in his father's house—knew him about the same age that I hold Tarlton to have known—and even kissed him. The passage in *Hamlet*, where the Prince says, while he gazes at the skull: "Here hung those lips, that I have kissed I know not how oft," had of course been written some time, before Shakespear and the Davenants became acquainted.

Of all the likenesses of the poet which have descended to us, the Ashbourne or Kingdon three-quarter portrait, dated 1611, the by no means ill-executed Droeshout painting: and a third, which gives the head only, and which constructively belongs to 1616, represent all that we have with a claim to contemporary origin and authority. The first and second contributed, perhaps, to inspire the posthumous bust at Stratford; the Droeshout was the prototype of the strangely, almost suspiciously inferior engraving from the same hand, which accompanied the first Folio. The Chandos portrait occupies altogether different ground, and is, no doubt, a posterior and composite work, apparently indebted neither to the Droeshout nor the Ashbourne.¹ The latter represents Shakespear full-faced and bareheaded, in a rich velvet dress with a belt round the waist, his right forearm resting on a skull, which lies on a table, and his left hand holding a glove. In his right hand is a book with broad ties, and

¹ The latter was copied in mezzotint in 1846, and is now reproduced in autotype from that source.



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on his left thumb a ring with a medallion. The date in the left upper corner marks the juncture, when the poet was meditating retirement from London, and when he may have stood for an artist in habiliments reserved for special occasions, as, for example, when he did personal suit and service to the lady of the manor for his property in Chapel Lane in 1602, or when he attended the marriage of his beloved daughter Susanna at Stratford Church in 1607. It would be a true pleasure to be able to believe, that it was his steadfast and accomplished friend Richard Burbage, whose excellent resemblance of himself by his own hand (a head only) is preserved at Dulwich, who executed this memorial preparatory to the final farewell of Shakespear to him and the metropolis, and even in view of a private suspicion, that the health of the poet was already far from robust. I submit it as a circumstance favourable to such an opinion, that it is anonymous, as if identification by his particular circle had been treated as a matter of course, as much as his own portrait, and, if so, it would be likelier that the work was undertaken at the artist's request, and never saw Stratford. The presence of the skull eminently merits notice and weight on a twofold account, as it may be interpreted into a remembrance by Burbage of a passage in the play, in which he had so often impersonated the hero; while it makes something for the common authenticity of the portrait and the bust, that the latter presents the same adjunct. Burbage, as an artist peculiarly familiar with the personal appearance of the poet, doubtless undertook, when the monumental bust for the church at home had been completed by Janssen the stonemason in London, the colouring of the work in order to produce a more realistic aspect, and improve the sufficiently feeble and indifferent piece of statuary; but even in 1748 the work from the united effect of neglect and damp was in a state of decay, and the colouring must have already become unrecognizable. In 1793 Malone caused the whole to be covered with a coat of white paint. As the widow of Shakespear survived till 1623, she had the oppor-

tunity—possibly the satisfaction—of beholding the tribute of others to her late husband in its pristine freshness, when she went with the Doctor, and Susanna and Judith, to church, no less than the place of interment, while the original slab covered the remains.¹

A duplicate of the Ashbourne portrait is understood to be in existence and in the hands of a gentleman, who had it from his father. But it differs in having the inscription and Shakespear's name along the top of the canvas, which favours a surmise that it is a copy. The owner has equally an idea, without having heard my view, that Burbage was the artist. But a confirmation of such an opinion to a certain extent exists in the shape of a head of the dramatist, painted on board, when Shakespear was very near his end, and about which the tradition in 1750 was that it was painted to oblige "a much valued friend." 'Twas a journey to Stratford by the younger Burbage on so sorrowful and solemn an occasion, although he himself was in failing health, nothing can be more likely, when we consider, how infinitely closer and older had been their friendship than that subsisting between Shakespear and Jonson and Drayton; and the head, with an allowance for all the circumstances, reminds us of those of himself and his brother-actor Sly at Dulwich. He was the only man in Shakespear's circle anywhere, to whom such a performance can be ascribed. The head has beneath it a copy of verses, which are said to have been originally, though at present much defaced, written in letters of gold.² This, in common with the Ashbourne and Chandos paintings makes the hair of Shakespear dark, not auburn.³ There is that peculiar brilliance in the eyes premonitory of death.

If the Ashbourne portrait of 1611 is, as I hope,

¹ It has been replaced, probably more than once.

² According to an inscription on the back dated 1750. The poetical relative Greene was at hand to compose the verses, and Burbage was, as independent evidence seems to establish, perfectly capable of transferring them to the panel, and gilding them.

³ See Halliwell Phillipps, *Outlines*, 1886, ii. 258.



and think it should be, accepted, that, the Droeshout, of which we do not seem to possess either the exact history or chronology, or the circumstances under which it reappeared in the form of an indifferent engraving in 1623,¹ and the head of 1616, form the complement in the present direction of our Shakespearean inheritance. A bust,² in its integrity more or less characteristic and vivid, in the chancel of a Midland provincial church, and a portrait attached to a book by no means in all hands, long constituted the only aids to a conversance with the personal aspect of Shakespear, and they were surely unprepossessing and unpersuasive enough.

Although the will in 1616 specifically left the wearing apparel to Joan Hart, and the wardrobe must have comprehended numerous handsome and durable objects, the personal effects of the poet of anything approaching an authentic character are an absolutely negative quantity, unless we accept the pair of gloves, which are said to have passed from a descendant of Shakespear to an actor (? Ward) who presented them in 1769 to Garrick, Mrs. Garrick bequeathing them in 1822 to Mrs. Siddons. In 1884 they were in the possession of Mr. Furness. The question is, were these the gloves which are seen in the portrait of 1611? They may have immediately descended from the owner to his sister, Joan Hart, with the rest.

Outside this small salvage there are only the articles manufactured out of the New Place mulberry tree, namely, the Harborne arm-chair, the Garrick cup, and the Sharpe

¹ It is quite possible that in 1623, when the idea of letting a portrait accompany the Plays arose, the Ashbourne picture was not accessible. In a group of Leads on the title-page of Taylor the water-poet's *Heads of all Fashions*, 1642, is a caricature of the Droeshout, which was perhaps superfluous. Jonson in his lines upon it equivocally says, that its merit might have been greater had the artist or engraver been able to draw the Wit as well as the Figure. Where Jonson speaks of *brass* he means copper-plate.

² The Janssens were busily employed about this time, both in London and the provinces. They had come to England some time previous to 1619. Friends in London, maybe Burbage personally, defrayed the cost of the bust, its transit and instalment.

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inkstand, all of which bear the stamp of authenticity, although the interest attached to them is posthumous and indirect.

The dearth of particulars dealing with the personal history of the poet is at first sight the more surprizing when it is taken into account that he was more or less constantly mixed up with affairs likely to involve publicity. He surely wrote letters; not a fragment of one has ever been beheld—only five signatures to documents, one accompanied by two monosyllables in his hand: two or three autographs in books: behold the sum total. He wrote his own plays, and in several cases revised them, and edited plays by other men; no contemporary trace of either species of record has come down to us even in a scrivener's copy. He held conversations with friends and acquaintances; only a scarcely intelligible remark about certain enclosures in his native place, and a statement at second hand about Jaggard the printer, have been preserved. He had more or less friendly relations with noble and even royal personages, yet not a distinct or positive vestige of the intercourse has survived. Yet how little has been transmitted about such important characters in a somewhat similar sphere of activity as the Burbages, Alleyn, and Henslowe, and how far less we should have, had not Henslowe left a Diary, and had not Alleyn, besides leaving a Diary, founded a college, where his papers were deposited? I apprehend, notwithstanding, that in the case of Shakespear, whose avocations were so constant and so manifold during nearly thirty years, and who was a personage of such exceptional eminence, a mass of precious documentary and autograph matter was lost in some fire. The handful of papers which have escaped the ravages of neglect and accident, must be the slenderest salvage.

It is to be taken into account that only a single manuscript of Jonson is known—that of the *Metamorphosed Gypsies*—and we hold only one or two original letters. We are indebted to Drummond's Notes of his conversations with that writer for a few details, and a volume of early tran-

scripts of Jonson, Chapman and Harvey correspondence, which recently came to light, served to encourage the hope that even better things may reward future gleaners or explorers. Of Marlowe, Greene, Nash, and other contemporaries the information is even scantier, although they wrote so much, and, except Marlowe, were before the world so long.

During six or seven and twenty years, with occasional intermissions, of his busy career, Shakespear was at work in London day by day, mingling with friends, reading, writing, concluding agreements, and filling parts at the theatre; and when every available source has been exhausted, we contemplate the accessions of three quarters of a century or more to our stores with a pleasure qualified by the fear that the end has been reached without enlightening us on many outstanding problems.

The process of restoration in this case has been singularly gradual, and a few new points have sufficed to confer on the finder a kind of celebrity. The effect of many of the fortuitous additions to Shakespearean biography has been to shew, on the one hand, how incomplete our material yet remains, and is probably destined to remain, and on the other, how close to the surface more or less important evidences have lain during ages. Our earlier commentators or editors would have been immeasurably surprized to learn that in the *Journal* of the commander of an East-Indiaman, 1607, it is set down that for the sake of affording the crews of two vessels, sailing in company, wholesome diversion, the plays of *Hamlet* and *Richard II.* were performed on board.¹

How many men of letters and genius, who have passed away almost within our own time, have left behind them little more in the way of personal record; and it is in reality a source of regret, rather than a ground for astonishment, that Shakspear, living and dying under conditions so immensely more unpropitious to the survival of material for his history, should have been so incompletely disclosed to us.

¹ Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners*, 1865, p. cxi.

I am tempted to refer to one or two somewhat parallel cases—in some respects more striking—of the oblivion, which may overtake a man of eminence in his own day. There is the deplorable example of the neglect and indifference displayed by his contemporaries and immediate posterity toward the great Marquis of Worcester, of whom his modern biographer writes: "So entirely are his countrymen unacquainted with the history of his life, that a very plausible work might be written to disprove both his authorship of the *Century* and his invention of the steam-engine. Indeed Scotland has already contributed materials for the former, and M. Arago, the Astronomer Royal of France, has all but made out the latter."¹ The marquis died in poverty and obscurity. We not only do not know the place of his death, but the circumstances of his two marriages. Again, take the case of Robert Gunsley, Parson of Titsey in Surrey, who died in 1618, a munificent benefactor to Maidstone. Yet a letter in 1722 in answer to a demand for information respecting him, was met by an avowal, that all that could be found was the record of his burial.² I could furnish a long list of distinguished personages of former times and of all countries, of whose careers the particulars are equally fragmentary. Of how many thousand Englishmen, who pursued in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries active and conspicuous callings, do we hold to-day not a single letter, not a single anecdote—at most the dates of birth, burial, and possibly marriage! And how many of these corresponded all over the country and the world, and could not carry on their affairs, like the dramatist, with clients and friends *viva voce* or *in camera*! Taking a nearly contemporary case—that of Montaigne, a man of fortune and political distinction, a high municipal officer, and the personal acquaintance of three kings—one between whom and his large and varied circle thousands of letters arguably passed in the course of

¹ Dircks, *Life, Times, and Scientific Labours of the Second Marquis of Worcester*, 1865, viii.

² Newton, *History and Antiquities of Maidstone*, 1741, pp. 165-6.

thirty years; and what is the fact? Thirty-five epistolary documents, some saved by having served as prefatory matter to books, some by having been bound up by the recipients among family papers, have by the unwearied researches of editors and antiquaries been recovered in three centuries; and of his father, also an eminent public character, we do not possess in a literary sense a line.

CHAPTER VIII

Period of Neglect—Development of Puritanism and Dissent—A Shakespear in the United States in 1784—Collective editions of the older dramatists in slight demand—Remarks on the First Folio—State of Shakespearian knowledge in 1710—Original prices of the Plays and Poems—Notable copies of the First and Second Folios—Posthumous estimate of Shakespear and adaptation of his Plays by others.

THE period of neglect, so far as public representations on the stage, and the voice of critical opinion, went—the long night preceding the break of a new day—during which thousands of now priceless *editiones principes* must have silently perished, may be said to have set in, when the circle or generation which beheld and welcomed the first folio, had died away, and when the Civil War paralysed all theatrical operations, and discouraged literary enterprise.

In a play called *Love à la Mode*, 1663, by a Person of Honour, it is said:

“Were Shakespear, Fletcher, and renowned Ben
Alive, they’d yield to this more happie pen”

—which may be received as a piece of friendly doggerel, but is in keeping with the spirit of the time both in the absolute and relative extinction of the poet. It is equally characteristic of the prevalent feeling, that in 1659, Edward Leigh, Esquire, of Magdalen College, Oxford, in his *England Described*, signalises Charlecote as “the ancient habitation of the Lucies Knights,” and immediately below dismisses Stratford as “a little Mercate Town, where there is a stone Bridge supported with fourteen Arches.” But there was, down to the closing years of the seventeenth century, an undoubted bias of critical opinion or judgment adverse to the survival or support of the lofty valuation of Shakspear

as a dramatist, leaving his non-dramatic work out of account, even by his contemporaries and the immediately succeeding age, imperfect as we may think that to have been. In a performance by one Arrowsmith, entitled *The Reformation, a Comedy*, 1673, the poet is classed with Fletcher, Jonson, and Davenant as a man who had scribbled himself into the bulk of follies, and who not only did not know the laws of heroic or dramatic poetry, but how to write true English. Such criticisms, if they serve no other purpose, tend to exonerate those who lived nearer to Shakespeare, or at his side, from deficiency of insight.

So shortly after 1616 as when *Panthea*, a volume of poems by Sylvester and others appeared, Drayton is pronounced "the Prince of English Poesy"; this is perhaps interpretable in a lyrical sense, yet Drayton's fellow-countryman had left behind him evidence of his gifts in that direction, too. Howell, in an undated letter (about 1645) to Sir Edward Spencer, refers to the lack of interest at that period in antecedent authors.

To a limited extent, and in a narrow zone, the influence of Davenant, Milton and his nephews, and Dryden successively tended to save from complete oblivion the Shakespearean tradition and the remembrance of the glories of the old stage, and with these the fame of the poet underwent an almost total eclipse. For the possession by his plays of the later theatre was subject to conditions destructive of their integrity; they were improved and refined, as the phrase went, to suit the audiences of the Restoration and the era of Queen Anne; and his lyrics were only to be found in anthologies, side by side with those of writers of second and third-rate rank. Even in the Dictionary of Edward Philips, on the appearance of a new edition by Kersey in 1696, the pictorial frontispiece, with its group of representative portraits, does not include that of Shakespeare, as if he had then ceased to be viewed as a master of our language and an ornament of our literature.

In the Epistle before an abridgment by James Wright

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of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, 1693, he alludes to two of the most famous writers in England, Dugdale and Shakespear, "both Williams;" and he of course puts the poet second in order. Then onward to the eighteenth century revival—a very gradual one—what scope there was for the conversion of every kind of record into waste!

Dugdale himself forsooth had not much to say about a man, of whom his knowledge was, or ought to have been, so considerable and complete. His eyes lacked training. He indulges us in his *History of the County* with particulars of many matters, on which he might with smaller disadvantage have been less communicative—even silent.

Not merely among the generation or so which succeeded him in order of time, but among those who had at least the opportunity of seeing, if not of addressing him, does the comparative silence, the inadequate appreciation, manifest itself, and we find ourselves destitute of any copies of the poems and plays carrying evidence of contemporary study and approval, or the reverse, in the sense and way in which annotated examples have descended to us of the works of others. It might almost seem that his age reciprocated or resented the sublime, perhaps cynical, indifference of the poet, so far as anyone can judge, to the censure or applause of others; nor are we in possession of the slightest hint, with the one or two exceptions which have been noted, what views he entertained about attempts during his own lifetime to treat subjects already handled by himself, as, for instance, Christopher Brooke's *Ghost of Richard the Third*, 1614, a metrical composition assuming to unfold more than had been hitherto shown "either in Chronicles, Plays, or Poems," or the prose *History of Hamlet*, 1608, or the novel founded by Wilkins on *Pericles*, printed in the same year. The means of resolving some of these secrets may have perished, with the thousands of early English books and papers, which have returned to dust unseen and unnoted.

The rise and development of Puritanism was not the only factor in achieving almost the nearest approach possible to the

extermination of the more purely popular Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. That movement was powerfully aided by the spread of sectarianism and dissent, and the advance to the front of a narrow, bigoted, and sombre school of authors which throughout the rural districts at all events, and in all centres of religious intolerance, lifted up their voices against profane and voluptuous writings. Men and women began to acquire and cherish the *Practice of Piety*, the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Temple*, the *Synagogue*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Holy War*, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Supplication of Saints*, and thousands of other devout and fanatical effusions, a very pyramid of lean and windy inanities, which gradually effaced the works of the playwrights and lyrists all over the country, and from the pulpit and in private conference with members of their flocks pastors discouraged the perusal of all witless and unholy devices, into the number of which the amatory works of Shakespear indisputably entered. When James I. made his progress through Lancashire in 1617, he noted and reprov'd the prevalent intolerance of popular amusements, and in the ensuing year appeared the *Declaration concerning Lawful Sports to be used*.

When Bagford and Ames formed their assemblages of title-pages and fragments, we perceive, in wading through the huge volumes, the classes of books, which had then survived in the largest numbers; the bulk are just what one at the present time least seeks. If the really valuable records were withdrawn and bound up separately, they would not occupy a very large space. Of first editions of Shakespear there are none, nor did a later biblioclast, Sir John Fenn, meet with any, for as he remorselessly mutilated certain other Elizabethan remains, now approximately ascertained to be unique, he would not have hesitated to immolate an *editio princeps* of the *Passionate Pilgrim* or *Hamlet*. When the long-lost first impression of Greene's *Groatworth of Wit*, 1592, was at last found, it proved to have been Fenn's; he had cut out the device from the title to enrich

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his copy of Herbert's *Ames*, but considerably spared the rest.

It is a notorious fact, that the descendants of some branch at least of the Shakespear family, in common with his own immediate kindred, embraced the tenets of Puritanism; and when we perceive the ostensible tendency of the poet himself to keep aloof from his contemporary environments, it altogether becomes worth while to refer to the gentleman, "Mr. Shakespear," whom the Hazlitts met at Perth Amboy in the United States in 1784. What most struck them there, a family diary says, "was a puritanical old gentleman of the name of Shakespear," on whom they looked with great reverence, thinking perhaps that with the name he inherited the powers of the great dramatist; and the diarist affirms, that his features reminded her of the latter. "He was dressed in a sad-coloured suit, was reserved and stately, and took his coffee with the air of a prince in disguise."¹

There is a little more in this passage and circumstance than may at first sight suggest itself; for it thoroughly falls in with my conception of the self-containing humour of the man, whose fame drew attention to his namesake—this early settler in the States, of whose antecedents it is to be regretted that we hear nothing. Was he the representative of a pilgrim father? Was he of the Warwickshire stock? Was this reserve, this reticence, a prevailing and inherited trait?²

But so far as Stratford, and its muniments and recollections, go, the very name appears to have dropped out of mention within a generation, even while representatives of the poet yet resided there. Shakespear had kept aloof,

¹ *Four Generations of a Literary Family*, by W. C. Hazlitt, 1897, I. 32.

² It may be of collateral interest to remind the reader that at Haseley, near Warwick, the residence of Job Throckmorton, a prominent actor in the Martin Mar-prelate controversy, and at Whitefriars, Coventry, the residence of John Hales, Esq., two at least of the famous series of Tracts were secretly printed.

so far as he could, from local affairs, and his link with the town where he first saw the light, was almost severed by his committal to the ground. The names and personalities of Hall, Quiney, Hart, Nash, Barnard, overlaid those of one unspeakably greater than them all.

Although Fynne, in his *Histrionastix*, 1633, complains that then¹ Shakespear's plays were printed in the best crown paper, far better than most Bibles, collective editions of dramatists were not in vogue about 1616. The monumental honour which Jonson saw erected to his friend, and helped to render somewhat more perfect, had been raised to himself in his life-time, and to him alone. A publisher had been found to speculate in a first instalment of the Works in the very year in which the world lost Shakespear, but even in this exceptional case nearly a quarter of a century elapsed before the whole undertaking was completed (1616-41), and the author was not spared to witness the conclusion. Nor did the much-applauded writings of Beaumont and Fletcher receive a similar homage till 1647; and the Plays of Marlowe, Peele, Greene, Heywood, Middleton, Massinger, and Shirley remained inedited down to modern days. Certain favourite productions, dramatic or lyrical, were kept in print, and passed through successive impressions; there is quite a series of posthumous issues of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*; and we encounter, only a few years posterior to the first appearance of *Venus and Adonis*, in an early MS. addition to John Bennet's *Madrigals*, 1599, a piece of dubious homage to the poet as a lyrist, in the form of a sort of travestie, beginning—

"Venus by Adonis side,
Crying kist and kissing eride;
Fa, la, la"—

and the classical legend had been farther familiarized by Constable in his *Shepherd's Song of Venus and Adonis* in *England's Helicon*, 1600. But the cost and risk of the folio

¹ The second folio edition had recently appeared.

format, where a large sale was required, at 20s. at least, to reimburse the bookseller, seems in the case of the drama to have long deterred the trade, while edition upon edition of Burton's *Anatomy*, and scores of theological and mystical works, were brought out without hesitation and without danger. With respect to the Shakespear of 1623, however, there were peculiar difficulties apart from the outlay, for several of the Plays had never been committed to type, and others had received at the hands of the author not only revision but substantial amplification. The volume, as we hold it in our hands to-day, is excessively creditable to those who made themselves responsible for it, for I am of opinion that the editors fulfilled their sacred trust conscientiously and faithfully; and it is because the critical superintendence and selection of texts were not points then adequately appreciated, that the precious and unique book, holding within its covers matter nowhere else extant in type or MS., cannot be treated as more than the foundation of an edition aspiring to completeness and precision, and that the original quartos, little esteemed in 1623, have to be enlisted as prompters and coadjutors.

Occasional uncertainty or indecision may very naturally have existed as to the sequence of the plays; in fact, in the Daniel and Coutts copy there is a torn leaf indicative of an original intention to let *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida* stand in consecutive order, and in a second, sold in 1855, two leaves in *As You Like It* were cancelled, and reprinted at the time, thus evincing a solicitude to ensure accuracy.

Heming and Condell are regarded as the superintendents of the folio; but the extent to which it exhibits so far momentous inedited matter forces us to believe that there was some other hand or hands concerned in the enterprize, and it is to be remembered that Shakespear's two friends claim no higher distinction than that of having *collected* the texts, as if they were in the keeping of several persons, presumed like the Sonnets. The distribution into Comedies,

Histories, and Tragedies seems, again, to reveal an editor conversant with classical prototypes, nor must we forget, that there is some ground for the theory, that in the case of certain plays, notably *Henry VIII.*, a skilled and sympathetic hand was needed to supply imperfections in the copy, where the author left his MS. incomplete. Elsewhere I take occasion to note that the production of the folio, seven years after Shakespear's death, was an enterprise which was thought sufficiently adventurous to demand a syndicate of four stationers, of whom the rather well-known Edward Blount was one, and Isaac Jaggard, related to the publisher of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599 and 1612, was another. The watermarks on extant copies of the book as first issued vary, as if the partners in the speculation had sent in to the printer their respective quota of paper.

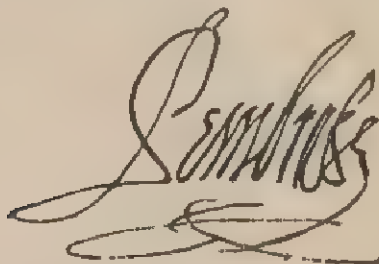
There had been, as we know, impressions in 1623¹ and 1632, and a third appeared in 1663; but it is presumable, from a notice attached to Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wild Goose Chase*, 1652, that there was then some expectation of republishing Shakespear's and Jonson's Plays once more. No such plan was actually carried out, although the idea is again mooted before the Beaumont and Fletcher of 1679; and in fact Shakespear passed through two more folio issues, before his friend again received a similar honour in 1692. It seems to me extremely questionable, whether as many as 600 copies of the First Folio of Shakespear were printed.

There are two clear and broad divisions, not merely practicable, but expedient for critical and other purposes, in the first collective impression of the Plays: namely, those dramas which had been committed separately to type at anterior dates, and those which did not appear till 1623. On the whole, the texts of the latter group are far purer than those of the reprints from the quartos with or without castigation on the part of the author or of an editor unnamed. This point raises the interesting question as to the nature of the

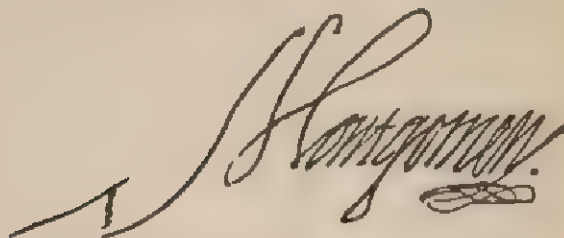
¹ The Lenox Copy has been cited as bearing the date 1622; but the final numeral has been sophisticated.

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material or printer's copy, which supplied the basis for so much of this historical volume. In their Epistle to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, "the two incomparable

A large, elegant handwritten signature in dark ink, likely of the Earl of Pembroke, featuring a prominent initial 'P' and a long, flowing tail.

WILLIAM HERBERT, EARL OF PEMBROKE (1601-30).

A large, elegant handwritten signature in dark ink, likely of the Earl of Montgomery, featuring a prominent initial 'M' and a long, flowing tail.

PHILIP HERBERT, EARL OF MONTGOMERY (1605-30).¹

brethren," Heming and Condell say: "We [that is, immediate posterity] have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." The term "papers" might signify autographs or transcripts—almost indubitably we should understand the latter; and at any rate the reference is to unprinted texts which, if they were scrivener's copies, would naturally be transfers from lost originals, bearing the final corrections and additions of the dramatist, as contrasted with the faulty and imperfect presentations derived from unauthorized sources, and offered to us in the quartos. For the relative accuracy of the plays first published in 1623 the world may therefore be indebted

¹ He succeeded his brother as Earl of Pembroke in 1630, and survived till 1650.

to the care exercised by such as had the task of converting Shakespear's possibly not too lucid characters as an editor or reviser of his own labours into something which seemed more intelligible, even if it was not what was really intended. The exact history of the transition of the pieces previously printed to their places in the folio, and of the peremptory need of their occasional co-operation in the process of forming an acceptable text, is a part of the subject beset by inconsistencies and contradictions. We are plainly reduced to the position of adopting an eclectic principle at the hazard of unwittingly reversing in places the ultimatum of the person best entitled to decide. The obscurity, in which the descent of the material edited by Heming and Condell, and possibly overseen by Jonson, is involved, makes it hopeless to arrive at any confident solution of the presence, amid so much that is excellent, of not a little that is absolutely unworthy of the poet. Editorship by the author himself was very loosely performed, as in *Love's Labor's Lost*, 1598, which exceptionally underwent revision between performance and publication in separate form. But within the covers of the folio of 1623 there is proof of a castigating and amplifying hand, where the texts had been suffered to pass unread or unfinished in the quartos, and this is signally exemplified in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* of 1602. On the whole, my verdict is in favour of the employment in 1623 of printed and manuscript texts enriched by the hand of the poet, perhaps without the intervention of a scrivener, and the consequent misinterpretation of occasional words or sentences by the printer.

The measure of editorial attention and vigilance in the conduct of the folio of 1623 through the press was anyhow sensibly governed and stimulated by the friendly and intelligent zeal of Shakespear's two fellows, whom he had kindly remembered in his will, and who stood to him in better stead than the folks at New Place. But anyhow altogether the world is an everlasting debtor to the combined effort which vested in its hands the unique inheritance, where so much,

had the MSS. copies perished, would have been irreparably lost, since no duplicates have ever been beheld.

The panegyrical matter attached to the first and second folio edition of the Plays, as well as that scattered among separate publications, partakes of the same inadequate quality, from a modern point of view and from our comparative critical standard. There were throughout these complimentary tributes, with a willingness and desire to do justice to the departed writer, symptoms that hardly a single contributor grasped the full bearings and extent of his thesis, or the vast difference between himself and the man whom he undertook to commend. Such a deficiency of insight is most noticeable in the verses by Jonson and Milton, because these two witnesses were the most eminent among all those who united to transmit their testimony to us; and the case of Jonson is the more striking from his closer and more direct contact with the object of his praise. The metrical and prose estimates, the latter in the *Discoveries*, seem as hearty and genuine as they are unsatisfactory; and Jonson screens himself behind the immaturity of his judgment. He was in 1623 fifty years of age—either a fool or a physician, as the saying goes. His lines embrace within their limits a homage truly magnificent; but they scarcely make a serious attempt to discriminate or define the noble and peculiar gifts of the poet, who had been associated with him in so many ways. They are too long, too diffuse, too classical. But they enshrine a noble and unforgettable sentiment, where Jonson pronounces his great friend “a Monument without a Tomb.” In my view I am supported by the words of Dryden, who stigmatizes Jonson’s verses as “an insolent, sparing, and invidious panegyric,” and proceeds to deliver the opinion, that Shakespear had excelled all the ancient playwrights. But Jonson himself, whose humour appears to have been somewhat wayward, elsewhere prints that appreciation, to which even Dryden could have found little to add. I, of course, allude to the passage in *Poetaster*, 1602, just when his contemporary and friend was lavishing on the world some

of his finest, most characteristic, and most unapproachable compositions, where he makes Shakespear's natural genius take precedence of all rules of art, and prognosticates his immortality. This judgment may be taken to have been committed to paper, when Jonson had had a full opportunity of founding an opinion, not only on some of the historical plays, but on the *Merry Wives* on the one hand and on *Hamlet* on the other. Yet what are we to think, if the passage in *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614, points to Shakespear, as I suppose it does, of Jonson classing the *Winter's Tale* and the *Tempest* among Drolleries? And again, even when he refers to his contemporary's superiority to rules of art, he appears to confound the thing itself with the regulations or canons, by which he deemed that it should be regulated. On that point Shakespear became his own lawyer.

As I have said, Jonson may have had in certain moods a true perception of the higher reach of his friend, and have entertained a jealousy of one, who stood between him and the first place in dramatic art; and there is the additional circumstance to be taken into account, that, if Shakespear, as we think, received a gracious letter from his sovereign, doubtless allusive to his poetical gifts, such an unique tribute could scarcely fail to produce some heart-burning on Jonson's part, seeing that the latter had been in his Masques so much more closely in touch with the Court.

The mediocre lines by Milton on Shakespear, commencing:—

"What needs my Shakespear for his honour'd bones
The labour of an age in piled stones?"

are borrowed, so far as the opening and cue go, from a passage in the play of *Tancred and Gismunda*, 1591, where the Second Chorus is made to say:—

"Queen Artemisia thought an heap of stones
(Although they were the wonder of that age)
A worthless grave, wherein to rest the bones
Of her dear lord——"¹

¹ Hazlitt's *Dudley*, vii. 48.

The author of *Lycidas* and *Comus* had perhaps fallen in with the old drama, and had appropriated the image. The main, if not sole, significance of Milton's testimony lies in the expression which he applies to the volume, in which it was set down—in the word *unvalued*, in relation to the Plays, as if the newer writer was conscious in 1632, as a young man of four-and-twenty, of the inadequate estimation of the dramatist, who had prematurely passed away, when he was a child of eight. Immediately after the death of Shakespear, and even down to 1630, the plays continued to attract large and appreciative audiences at the ordinary theatres and to be performed at Court. But the cases are sufficiently rare, where, during the interval between the closing of the theatres and the Restoration, they were demanded even in book-form. The exceptions are the *Merchant of Venice*, 1652, *Lear* and *Othello*, 1655, and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, of which last no copy is known, although it is advertized as on sale in 1656 in quarto with dramas by Jonson, Shirley, and others. Evelyn the Diarist witnessed the performance of *Hamlet* in 1661, and was mainly impressed by the disgust which the old plays began to inspire in "this refined age." Nine years elapsed between the output of the first and second folios, and it is a fact which speaks for itself that, in launching it, it was thought desirable to distribute the risk among six, instead of four, stationers. In 1663, however, Evelyn's criticism notwithstanding, a single publisher undertook the book with the supplementary dramas annexed. For the fourth folio the paper appears to have been procured from Holland, and bears the Dutch maker's water mark and name (Van Duvantegard).

No copy of any of Shakespear's Works, plays or poems, has been so far traced to Jonson's possession, although he was the owner of two successive libraries. As the first of these was at least partly burned, let us imagine his friend's productions having fallen a prey to the flames in the fire at Westminster, more especially as we remain without vestiges in his hands of the books of many others, in which or whom he was likely to be interested.

It is merely just to add to what has been said on this point that homage of an at least equally effusive and flattering tenor is offered by Jonson, in his lyrical works, to others—perhaps even of a more extravagant character; but then the writer was less constrained; there was no element of professional comparison or contrast where he was addressing himself to the lords and ladies of the Court, or to purely private individuals, and where the eulogy could scarcely react.

Shakespeare's fellows took false measurement of him, and regarded him as no more than one of themselves, and even a man who, like Milton, was outside the theatrical ring, did nothing toward a readjustment of the estimate. His deficiency of insight was more excusable, looking at his years, than that of Jonson; and both judgments were made public at a short interval. But in the present and a few similar cases it is quite as much to the absence of perspective as to any sentiment of jealousy or failure of sympathy that we owe imperfect appreciation; and, it being so, the result must be that a man of exceptional gifts rarely hears of them from his friends. In estimating the thought and language of Shakespeare we should draw a line at the period which his life and labours covered, and try to forget all that has since been added to our stores of suggestion and illustration, and the effect must be to elevate our appreciation, yet at the same time to shew the broad community in all ages between human nature and genius.

The compiler of a MS. List of Plays¹ about 1690 mentions *Timon* and *Othello* as then still in vogue at the theatres, but presumably with alterations. So far as the collected productions went, the issues of 1663 and 1685—an interval of over twenty years—satisfied the public demand, till the first decade of the eighteenth century had nearly expired, and that of 1685 can scarcely have been very widely read, as fine copies are yet common enough. It is very far from being so with the previous folio.

¹ A small 12° vol. bought for the British Museum in 1902.

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The exclusion from the folio of 1623, which so far formed a precedent for those of 1632, 1663, and 1685, of the non-dramatic writings, was neither an oversight nor an accident. It proceeded from a deliberate and correct persuasion on the part of the editors, that the Plays represented the true life's work of the author, and that the rest, if not disadvantageous, was at all events immaterial, to his fame. Such an opinion of course by no means contemplates the often exquisite and delicious songs scattered through the dramatic series, and which are as unexcelled as that for their beauty and wisdom.

The state of Shakespearean knowledge, among such as ought best to have known, was so low in or about 1710, that Lintot the publisher, in editing the lyrics to accompany the then recent edition of the plays by Rowe, informs us that "it is generally agreed he dy'd about the year 1616," and he makes this circumstance a ground for holding that the *Passionate Pilgrim*, having been printed seventeen years before his death, *was published by himself*. But, which is far more extraordinary and unpardonable, Rowe himself, a man of literary pretensions, refers in 1709 to the Poems of 1640 as a book, which he had but lately seen, and as to the genuineness of the contents of which he could not consequently speak. This was sixty years posterior to the appearance of the volume, and when *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* had already been inserted in the miscellany entitled *Poems on Affairs of State*, 1703-7, as Shakespear's. Curiously enough, the former took precedence, perhaps as a piece modelled on a historical tradition; and the publisher lets us know that he owed the idea of reproducing them to certain ingenious gentlemen, who thought that such labours of Mr. William Shakespear's (the Great Genius of our English Drama), *Rape of Lucrece* and his *Venus and Adonis*, which were never printed in his works, might be preserved. This was in 1707, two years prior to the collected impression by Lintot of the Poems. But, again, the bookseller, with the usual want of a sense of proportion and propriety, lays nearly equal stress on his good fortune in procuring from abroad a set of

satirical prints relating to contemporary French affairs, which occur toward the end of the volume.

Extrinsically or bibliographically speaking, the languid competition for this species of literature had a duration of a century and a half (1600-1750), and within that period the *Pilgrim* was bought for three halfpence in a volume with *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Sonnets* for a shilling. Let us not shed tears; as they were acquired, so they were estimated—still the prophecy of Thorpe in 1609 as to the usurious rise in the value of these productions was very far from being speedily fulfilled. A farther point seems to be that only two copies of the first, and a single copy of the second, folio, have apparently descended to us with evidences of distinguished contemporary ownership. Of these one of the first¹ and one of the second² were formerly the property, perhaps at different times, of Charles I., who is expressly stated by Milton to have studied the books in his days of trouble—whether the first or the second folio, for he had both at different times, is uncertain. The remaining copy of the first is that presented by Isaac Jaggard the publisher to Augustine Vincent the herald, and bears the arms of Vincent in blind, but has been damaged in the binding; and the Plummer of Middlestead *Hamlet* of 1604 stands alone in having received in the eighteenth century a separate binding of red morocco. The plays, and indeed the poems equally, were not among those literary treasures, on which the early collector lavished his money, as he might do on a *Practice of Piety* or a Herbert's *Temple*. A sheep-jacket or a stitched wrapper had to suffice; and it was the same with the other playwrights. There is, however, a copy of the folio of 1623, which possesses a very special interest, as it was the very book forwarded by the Stationers' Company, agreeably to an arrangement with Sir Thomas Bodley, in sheets as printed, and committed in February, 1623-4, to an Oxford binder, William Wildgoose, to be bound in its calf vesture. In

¹ Said to have been preserved, and to be still, in a French library

² Now in the British Museum.

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1664 it was sold, on receipt of the more complete third folio, to Richard Davis, the local bookseller, with other duplicates, for £24, and has been recently recovered from the Turbutt family, two of whose members were connected with Christ Church and Magdalen, for the extravagant sum of £2000, raised by public subscription. Since its departure from its original home, where it occupied a place on the shelves now less worthily filled by vol. i. of Harris's *History of Kent*, it has experienced very hard usage at the hands of its holders, and is at present in a most lamentable state of deterioration, nearly the whole of the title and the whole of the leaf with Ben Jonson's verses having been lost, and many pages having sustained damage. There are traces of a chain. Had the Bodleian authorities kept the book, it might have been unique in point of condition. But some of these purblind academical wiseacres even questioned the utility of retaining the copy of Milton's *Minor Poems*, 1645, presented by the poet himself with an autograph letter.

The plain truth seems to be that, while the presses of the two universities teemed during these anterior centuries with matter of the least possible concernment—the merest rubbish in fact—in a permanent sense, there was no general or official sympathy with such writings as those of Shakespeare, notwithstanding the incidental mention of him by Meres and by Clarke, and the performance of *Hamlet* at Oxford and Cambridge; and we possess no early edition of his poems or his plays with an Oxford or Cambridge imprint. In our time the Universities have produced collective editions of the poet, and sorry and shameful performances they are.

We have contemporary authority for believing that the price of issue of the *Sonnets* in 1609 was five silver pence of the day, a penny in excess of the sum probably charged for the quarto plays, which generally extend to the same number of pages—some of them to more. But the *Pilgrim* of 1599, making only 30 duodecimo leaves against 40 quarto leaves of the *Sonnets*, was scarcely estimated at more than twopence at the time of publication, nearly double what its

eighteenth century purchaser gave for it and the *Venus and Adonis* together. In or about 1680 Narcissus Luttrell went to the length of paying a shilling for the *Sonnets*, more than twice the published price; but in 1687, according to a contemporary catalogue, the first folio of the Plays, brought out in 1623 at 20s., had temporarily receded to 14s.¹ These are samples of the call for such books by generations not unwilling to pay heavy amounts for volumes, which at present command scarcely any amount whatever—which one may have weighed out by the pound or the hundredweight. Four pence or a groat is the figure attached by the coeval buyer to many a fugitive poem of the closing years of the same century, composed of four or six printed leaves, a symptom of the decrease in the purchasing power of money.

The paucity of Elizabethan dramatic and poetical remains in general is to be ascribed to a prolonged term of depreciation, rather than to assiduity of perusal; even imperfect copies or fragments of Shakespear lyrics and plays in the original editions most sparingly occur, and the survival in a few isolated cases in virgin state seems to tell the same story of indifference and a changed taste.

After all, however, perhaps the most impressive evidence of the prompt forgetfulness of Shakespear is the circumstance that, in their conversations at Hawthornden in 1619, only three years after his death, there was scarcely any ostensible allusion worth mentioning to him or to his writings by Jonson or Drummond, that there was an equal absence of solicitude to impart and to invite intelligence; and this was while the old school of dramatic literature still held its

¹ In 1712 Maurice Wynne gave 27s. for a fine copy, yet surviving, of the second folio. In 1685 a copy of the fourth, then just published, fetched 12s. 8d. by auction. But the volume was still in stock, and might be had in quires. Sir Richard Balstrode, born in 1610, gave for Jonson's works, 1616, 20s., but that was of course some years posterior to the date of the book's appearance. The price attached to the Jonson may have guided the publisher of the Shakespear a few years later. In Sir Henry Mainwaring of Peover's copy of Beaumont and Fletcher, 1647, occurs on a flyleaf the coeval note of price, £1 3s. 6d.

ground. At the same time, from the general tenor of the disclosures of Jonson to his Scottish host, there is the less room to suspect that we have lost any personal anecdotes of the recently deceased poet of a disadvantageous complexion, while the talk (for which we have to take Drummond's word) resulted in a verdict for the late Master Shakespear as an indifferent third.

The earliest symptoms of a consciousness among readers and thinkers, that the writings of Shakespear preserved some measure of vitality and permanence, are to be sought in occasional references to him and them in such works and authors as I have indicated; and a remarkable piece of testimony has fallen in my way, illustrating the possession by Charles I. of the first folio, namely, the performance at Hampton Court before the King on October 17, 1630, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.¹ Inasmuch, more especially, as a preponderance of eulogy was bestowed by the earlier critics on Shakespear's comic creations, a notable enunciation is that of John Hales of Eton, who affirmed that "he would shew all the poets of antiquity outdone by Shakespear in all the topics and commonplaces made use of in Poetry;" and there was a learned conference on the subject at Eton, at which Lord Falkland, Sir John Suckling, and others were present, and that view confirmed. But Hales at any rate looked rather at the more superficial side than at the profound dramatic reach. The Lyrics had enjoyed a considerable term of popularity during the life and after the death of the writer, more especially the *Venus and Adonis*, which is found appealing, even more perhaps than the *Lucrece*, to classes of readers, who turned from the Sonnets as more or less trite and unintelligible, even although Thorpe had diplomatically introduced them as literary delicacies so far

¹ In the same year the *Merry Wives* was reprinted, for the first time, from the folio of 1623, and I suggest that this may have been also commanded at Court, although it is not mentioned in the MS. document, forming part of a small folio volume in the original parchment wrapper, with which I met a few years ago.

withheld from the world, for the conspicuous declaration on the title-page that they had never been printed before, plainly bespoke their anterior life in a manuscript form. The dramatic labours were less demanded in book-form for purposes of study or perusal subsequently to their appearance on the stage. But it was the Plays, which eventually won back for Shakespear his fame and his rank, while the Poems began even in the eighteenth century to recede into the background, to be tolerated for the sake of the rest—in collective impressions of the works to be thrown in, as it were, without farther charge. Nor were there wanting editors, who treated them as pure surplusage.

During the seventeenth century and the commencing years of the eighteenth there existed a minority, which could point to the Plays on their bookshelves, and from time to time turned over the leaves with a sort of vague interest without any definite persuasion or any literary gain, but with whom it was a more or less distinct tradition, that here was a volume, of which some of the finest judges had formerly spoken with affectionate regard.

From 1712 or thereabout forward we meet with some of the separate plays—*Hamlet*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Othello*, and a few others—in editions of no critical pretensions from the presses of Ireland and Scotland, as well as London, and (in translations) from those of Germany. The Comedies and Histories, and the Lyrics, appear to have been in the least demand. In one or two cases the original language was reproduced at the Hague by a bookseller named Johnson. In 1731 the Ruddimans printed for Allan Ramsay the tragedy of *Macbeth*, as it was then in course of performance at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh. This was, it seems, the earliest representation of the play, so peculiarly interesting to Scottish readers and spectators across the border.

There was not any actual school of verbal criticism previous to the days of Sir Thomas Hanmer, unless we are to receive as such the remarks and suggestions made by the second Earl of Rochester, and found among his papers after

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his death at Woodstock in 1681. These, not printed till 1761,¹ when Edward Capell (the Patron of Shakespear—the expression is that of the author of the *Pursuits of Literature*) had begun to turn his attention to the subject, are certainly far from important; yet they are entitled to rank as the starting-point in the process, scarcely even now brought to a conclusion, of textual collation and recension; and the strangest part of the matter seems to be, that such a labour should have had such a pioneer. We probably owe this lean critical exercitation to a cursory study of the Plays of the earlier poet in connection with his own dramatic efforts. Yet altogether we cannot help seeing that, during the entire period from the Restoration to the issue of Rowe's edition of the Plays in 1709, followed at leisurely intervals by those of Pope, Theobald, and Hanmer, the name was kept before the world by arbitrary adaptations of certain of the separate pieces at the theatres of the three kingdoms, while the day had yet to come for accurate and just appraisement. In a List of Plays at the end of the *Reformed Wife*, 1700, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are included in such a subsidiary way as to shew, that the advertizer considered them to be less in demand, if not in merit, than productions by Waller, Cowley, and Suckling. Nevertheless, as I have intimated, some of the series in a more or less impure textual state were kept in stock by a few leading booksellers in London from about 1656 to about 1710.

The posthumous mentions, as a rule, merely establish, if they do so much, the survival, in a few special directions, of the memory of the poet and his dramatic, rather than his lyrical writings; and we perceive that in every instance the resurrection of the name imports a text of the original author adapted to a later and not improved taste. No doubt, the playwrights of the Restoration, whatever they might say or grant, studied the works of their predecessors, and adopted any notions, which suited their purpose, with

¹ In the edition of the Works, 1761. The copy, which I used, I caused to be sent across the water to Mr. Furness for use in his Variorum.

or without recognition. One of the most curious examples is the Duke of Newcastle's *Triumphant Widow*, 1677, which betrays the Shakespear influence in several passages or phrases. We meet there with imitations of Autolycus and Shallow. Sir John Noddy is a poor copy of Falstaff. There is also the notion about the woman being *hors du garde* for her body at 14, which reminds us of the passage in *A Winter's Tale*. There is a passage in the dedication by Mrs. Behn to Lord Worcester of her *Emperor of the Moon*, 1687, which may seem to look back regretfully at the old Elizabethan theatre; for the writer observes that it was the admirable work of Shakespear, Fletcher, and Jonson, which formerly enabled the town to keep so many houses open. This utterance, however, is rather *per se* and exceptional, for the excellent caterers for the stage in the post-Shakespearean era deemed the work of the earlier masters, as a rule, only admissible and likely to succeed, when they had reduced it to their own level or standard. In an edition of Webster's *White Devil*, 1672, the writer of the preface commends in succession Chapman, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and then proceeds to speak of the *right happy and copious industry* of Mr. Shakespear, Mr. Dekker, and Mr. Heywood. In the *Athenian Mercury* for 1691, we read: "Father Jonson was excellent at Humour, Shakespear deserves the name of Sweetest which Milton gave him;" and Lee, in more than one of his own performances, dwells more or less discriminatingly on the relative merits of Shakespear, Jonson and Fletcher—as usual, without accentuating their disparity. In short, our poet merely forms one of a group, not the foremost figure; and Lord Lansdowne went so far, in bringing out the *Merchant of Venice* in 1701, as to substitute lines to make out the sense, where he had altered the language of his predecessor. Possibly his lordship was barely satisfied with the Rev. Edward Young's acclamation of him in 1713 as "a second Shakespear." He did not stand alone.

There is, however, the singular point in relation to

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Webster's play above-mentioned, that in one extant copy of it at any rate an impression of the Droeshout portrait is printed on the back of the title. There is no more than the incidental notice of the earlier writer to explain or justify the proceeding.

The contention that the interest in Shakespear and his work remained very languid and partial during the remainder of the century which witnessed the close of his life, and during the first half of the next one, is not impaired, I think, by occasional visits to Stratford by persons who happened to be travelling in the county on pleasure or business, and the notice by them of the monument in the church, as the birthplace and the actual dwelling, do not seem to have excited any curiosity or attention. In fact, with the fewest possible exceptions, and those confined to a period when the poet was living, and in the full enjoyment of his reputation, the references in printed books and MSS. singularly coincide in their deplorable and irritating ineptitude.

II

THE LYRICAL WORK

CHAPTER IX

The Lyrics of 1593-4—Conditions, which favoured their successive appearance—*Venus and Adonis* specially licensed by the Primate—Peculiar feature about the two books—Significance of the motto on the title of the *Venus and Adonis*—Was *Lucrece* written in a London suburb?—The Plague of 1593—Coeval notices of the Poems—The *Passionate Pilgrim*—Shakespear's earliest Critics—Verses before the second issue of Florio's *Montaigne* and beneath the portrait of James I. ascribable to Shakespear—The verses before Florio's *Second Fruits* probably not Shakespear's—Dubious authenticity of a passage in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

THE Works are not only classifiable into dramatic and non-dramatic, but the latter may be subdivided into two almost distinct types and sections: 1. The two early lyrical Poems with the few occasional pieces contributed to miscellanies or at any rate comprised in them, and the Sonnets; and (2) the Songs incorporated with the Plays. A very brief comparative study of the two groups should suffice to satisfy any one, that in the latter lay the main strength of the writer outside the drama; and while these productions are unequal, some of the happiest and most excellent occur in the earliest plays, some of the least so in those of the maturest period; yet, on the whole, they surpass the *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and *Sonnets*; and the author may have shared the indifference to those other efforts evinced and expressed by so many modern critics.

There are no extant particulars of the circumstances, under which Shakespear contracted a sort of acquaintance with Henry Wriottesley, third Earl of Southampton of that line, who as a mere boy had succeeded to the title in 1581, and who in 1593 was still a minor under the guardianship of Lord Burleigh. We know, from the letter to Hicks, that in June, 1592, a few months prior to the issue of the poem,

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the Earl was lodging in the Strand. His mother, after the death of the second Earl, was remarried to Sir Thomas Heneage, Vice-Chamberlain of the Queen's Household, of the Heneages of Cadeby, Lincolnshire, himself a poet, as we know from a recently discovered MS.¹ But the union was a very brief one, as Heneage died the same year.

The young Earl was apparently not reluctant to pose at this early stage of his career as a patron of literary men, for, two years prior to the publication of *Venus and Adonis*, John Clapham had obtained leave to inscribe to him a Latin poem called *Narcissus*, a theme allied to that adopted by Shakespear.² As Southampton seems to have been about this time near at hand, it may not therefore be necessary to go beyond the supposition that the latter made a direct appeal in a similar way. Perhaps Nash did the same, when he procured his lordship's countenance for his *Terrors of the Night*, 1594. But Southampton lived to see quite a small library of works, in which his name was thus associated.

Whatever may have been the precise origin of the first production of *Venus and Adonis*, there is little doubt that a helping agency to the prompt succession of the *Lucrece* was the enforced suspension of theatrical performances and of the Law Term in London owing to the plague of 1593, which had been followed by the phenomenal weather of 1594. *Venus and Adonis* was licensed on April 18, 1593, and *Lucrece* on May 9, 1594. Both poems were inscribed to the youthful Southampton, and were calculated to be agreeable to his taste and flattering to his vanity. Yet a much more remarkable feature in the presentation to the world of the former book must strike us from one point of view as having been its enrolment on the Stationers' Register under the special authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the same Dr. Whitgift, at whose house in November, 1592, Nash's

¹ Heneage had been in his younger days on intimate terms with Walter Haddon, who addresses to him several letters from Bruges in 1565-6.

² The copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1502, owned by the poet, was in all probability an early acquisition.

Summers' Last Will and Testament had been acted, but who subsequently grew less tolerant, and closed the register against Hall's *Satires*, Marlowe's *Ovid*, Cutwode's *Bumble Bee*, and other questionable articles, with which Shakespear's volume might have been not improperly bracketed. Perhaps the noble lord, whose name was attached to the dedication, despite his extreme youth and inexperience, had something to do with the indulgence, and Field the publisher might well be reassured by the hand of the Primate to the entry. I do not know what his Grace might have done if the Earl had backed the registration of another poetical effort of the day—Nash's *Choice of Valentines*—addressed by the author to his friend—to wit, the Earl, the dedicatee of his *Terrors of the Night*, 1594, which just succeeded Shakespear's two oblations.

A point of view, which must not be neglected in endeavouring to illustrate the personal character of the poet, is the taste and self-command, which he shews in the introduction of his works, where it is to be presumed, that he had the opportunity of exercising a direct control. The forefronts and preliminary Epistles of the two earliest products—the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*—how succinct both alike are, how much to the purpose, and how dissimilar from the florid and diffuse style then usually prevalent! If Shakespear in his *Sonnets* had the *Affectionate Shepherd* of Barnfield in view, the latter writer seems to have admired and copied the impressive brevity of the title to *Venus and Adonis*, as exempt from bookseller's garnish as the noble epistle to Lord Southampton is exempt from cliental adulation and servility. The fashion was, it must be said, not Elizabethan or Shakespearian in its origin, for we occasionally meet throughout the sixteenth century, when regular title-pages had come into general vogue, with similar frugality or similar reticence; and, rather curiously, in a book which the poet almost certainly held in his hand, and of which he made, as I shew, larger use than was previously suspected—the *Hundred Merry Tales*—this peculiarity is signally con-

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spicuous, and presents a striking contrast to the not long posterior publication, the *Merry Tales and Quick Answers*, which, we are assured on the threshold, were "very mery, and pleasant to rede." It meets the eye again in *England's Helicon*, 1600, and Shakespear's *Sonnets* forsooth betray a similar prepossession.

The two addresses to Lord Southampton in two successive years exhaust the recourse of the poet to such a kind of auxiliary tribute and homage. How many farther opportunities he had of linking noble and influential names with his own we know well enough, and we equally know that he never did so, although to take for granted his direct and tolerably intimate relations with the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery cannot be very rash in the face of certain familiar collateral indications.

It is observable that the terse, epigrammatic form was not limited to the lyrics. It extends to the denominations of the plays, as represented on the stage (not as separately printed), wherever we may conclude that the author had a ruling voice. Whatever might be his solicitude to attain a successful reception of his dramas at the theatres, we must acquit him of the disposition to fall into the booksellers' foible of appetizing title-pages—quite an epidemic in his early days, and extending to all classes of literature.

Taken in connection with the complaint in the *Sonnets* that the name of the writer had been branded by occupation forced on him, presumably that of an actor, the quotation from the *Amores* of Ovid on the title-page of *Venus and Adonis*—

"Vilia miretur vulgus ; mihi flavus Apollo
Pocula Castaliâ plena ministret aquâ—"

might at first appear to receive an unexpected illustration, the *Vilia* of the couplet possibly implying unworthy employments for a season discarded, while the despised and discredited performer on the boards of other men's plays assumed his true rank among the disciples of the Muses

under the most auspicious patronage. But it is to be suspected that he had in view prior compositions by other pens of a less classical complexion, although he had been anticipated by Lodge's *Scilla's Metamorphosis*, 1589, and at all events Clapham's *Narcissus*, 1591, and we are not accustomed to regard the *Amores* as among the more ambitious efforts of the Roman bard. There was nothing unusual in the metrical arrangement of Lodge's poem, and I can scarcely subscribe to the opinion, that it served Shakespear as a model. It was a brief interval, during which theatrical exhibitions were discontinued in London; and he proceeded bard and sonneteer.

I have pointed to *England's Helicon*, 1600, as somewhat cognate in its prolegomena to other Shakespearean books; but the most curious feature in it is the quotation from Tibullus on the title-page;—

"Casta placent superis,
Pura cum veste venite,
Et manibus puris
Sumite fontis aquam."

Which sends us back to the *Vilia miretur vulgus* of 1593, and more closely accords with the texture of the later volume. The poet was a contributor to the miscellany. If he suggested the motto he may have done so from a reference to the original, which he is just as likely to have possessed as the *Ovid*.¹ He had soon resumed his theatrical operations, and they were not so irksome in 1600 as they might have been seven years before.

Impartially speaking, it is fortunate for his reputation that this was no more than a temporary exigency. Looking

¹ There were two Aldine editions of Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, 1502 and 1515. Until the *Ovid* accidentally occurred, no one dreamed that he had that, and then its genuineness was questioned till the key to the signatures was pointed out by myself. This is a case, where one has to gather the material inchmeal. It is fairly clear that he was not unacquainted with some of Ovid's other writings and even with other Roman authors.

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at the maiden publication itself, one distinguishes occasional passages, which seem to prognosticate higher possibilities; but the *Lucrece* is decidedly inferior in every way; its preparation was arguably more rapid. In one or two descriptions in the 1593 volume we are probably bound to recognize, rather than early Shoreditch recollections, yet earlier Stratford ones.

A slender quarto volume in the Bodleian Library preserves within its covers the sole surviving copy of the *editio princeps* of *Venus and Adonis*, 1593, and a second work, nearly equal in rarity, if not in fame, Giles Fletcher's *Licia*. A singular history, of which we are not admitted to the commencement, is attached to the book. It forms No. 396 of "A Catalogue of a Curious and Valuable Collection of Books, which are now Selling (for Ready Money) at the Prices affixed to each Article; By William Ford, No. 14 Cromford Court, Manchester, MDCCCV." Ford's interleaved copy is before me, with his MSS. notes, relative to the buyers and prices. Although the items are said to be purchaseable at the figures attached, no figures are attached to lots 395-6; and against the latter we find written by the owner: "£25, 0. 0. Mr. Malone." The precious relic, which comes second in order, is described as "original edition, elegantly bound in Russia, gilt leaves, extraordinary rare;" and nothing is said of its antecedents. Malone hesitated to pay the amount asked, which was presumably higher, for Ford tells us that "£25 was the sum I *at last* obtained;" and he properly adds that, as the *Licia* went with it, the Shakespear really cost only about £10.¹ Bindley the collector, who evidently saw the book, recommended Ford to put it up to auction, and considered that it would have brought as much as one hundred guineas. Heber was on the ground, and ran Malone close, for there was a stipulation that the latter should surrender the *Licia* to his competitor; which, as the volume is in its original

¹ Yet at the Voigt Sale in 1806 Malone gave over £40 for a tract by George Whetstone.

state—in its Manchester livery—at the present moment, was never carried out.

Ford does not assist us in tracing back the *Venus and Adonis* to any anterior proprietor, nor is there any record of a copy having been offered for public sale at any time posterior to that of original issue; but a collateral circumstance enables me to offer an elucidation, which I regard as extremely plausible. During the years 1804–5, Mr. Thomas Lister Parker, of Browsholme Hall, West Riding of Yorkshire, was effecting extensive alterations in his residence. He was a young man of four and twenty, and may have taken no very considerable interest in early English literature, of which the library possessed a valuable collection. While he was engaged, however, in carrying out repairs and improvements, it seems to have occurred to him, that the aspect of the books was not very handsome or ornamental, and as he had engaged the services of other experts from a distance for other departments, he called in Ford to put the books in order, and where it was necessary, rebind them.¹ The owner was presumably more intent on rural employments and pursuits than on literary dilettantism, and the less important items by no means improbably passed into the hands of Ford, more especially as in 1810 four Caxtons were sold to Lord Spencer, Mr. Grenville, and Mr. Towneley for 165 guineas. It may not be irrelevant to mention that there was a succession of Warwickshire Parkers interested in literature, through whom those of Yorkshire, if related, may have heard of *Venus and Adonis*, when it was originally published.

It is distinctly asserted by Mr. Heber, in a note printed in the *Bibliotheca Heberiana*,² that Mr. Parker, his personal friend, had this transaction with the Manchester dealer,

¹ See *Account of Browsholme Hall*, 1815, printed anonymously, but attributed to Mr. Parker himself. He furnishes no information about Ford, which comes from Mr. Heber's memorandum attached to a copy of Gascoigne's *Poesies*, 1675, now in the Bodleian.

² *My Confessions of a Collector*, 1897, p. 25.

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and he also speaks of certain of the items having been shorn by the rebinder of some of their original amplitude of margin.¹ But it strikes me that we do not get here the precise facts or true chronological sequence, and that between the summons of Ford to Browsholme—I say, in 1804–5, when the structural and other embellishments were in progress, and the premises were ostensibly in a state of disorder—and the sale of the Caxtons a sensible interval elapsed,—Ford being allowed to acquire the *Venus and Adonis* and a few other prizes in 1804 or the following year under the category of unbound sundries, in which Mr. Parker, from his youth and inexperience, recognized no importance. The Caxtons appear to have been purchased direct from the owner without any intermediary, the fame of the library having been spread by the Manchester catalogue, and the indifference of Mr. Parker rendering the negotiation feasible. At the later point of time, there is no vestige or suggestion of Ford or of any operation outside the private disposal of the four books in question. The account of Browsholme Hall alludes in 1815 to the ancient library of the hereditary bow-bearers² of Bowland Forest under the Dukes of Buccleuch as a thing of the past, and specifies only a MS. on vellum, of which the history is not given, and the Caxtons, of which the history has been related. Beyond the Shakespear and a few other rarities there is not actually much in the 1805 catalogue of superlative moment; and it was perhaps the best haul, which Ford ever obtained. Among the purchasers was Mr. Gifford, who bought a large lot of the original editions of Shirley, even now sufficiently common; but Mr. Heber secured many rare *desiderata*, and Mr. Malone carried off the *spolia opima* in the *Venus and Adonis* and *Licia*, which, being among the articles in need of new liveries, and being cognate in

¹ Hazlitt's *Roll of Honour*, 1908, p. 175.

² Blount describes the functions and position of this officer, and prints his oath on entrance into his duties. *Lexicon*, 1670, sign. M. But he does not refer to the peculiar case of the Parkers.

subject and contemporary in date, were reclothed together in russia, as we now see them in the Bodleian. If my view be correct, they were bought by the Parkers at the time of publication.

A detail, which is far indeed from lacking significance, but which is of course independent of the question of provenance, is that in 1805 Ford, apparently a man of no mean intelligence, and fully aware of the immense rarity of the Shakespear piece, either found it bound up with the *Licia*, precedence being given to the latter, or (which is far more likely) himself united them with the same priority, and that his relative estimation of the two was very nearly balanced, whereas at the present moment £50 or so might secure a copy of *Licia*, and one of *Venus and Adonis* would leave £2000 behind it. More than a century since, not merely was it unsurmised, that no duplicate—not even an imperfect one—of the Shakespear was to occur, but it was probably unknown, that no other record of the survival of the book existed, since the mention in a Diary, formerly belonging to a friend of George Steevens, of its contemporary purchase on the 12th June, 1593, with another book, for twelve pence,¹ and the distance between the author and his contemporary—all his contemporaries—had yet to be realized. Ford deemed the Fletcher rare and the other “extraordinary rare”; yet, curiously enough again, he appraised the former higher than the latter; and in the same catalogue Lodge’s *Phyllis*, 1593, is valued on a similar principle at £10, 10s. About the time when this signally notable transaction took place, Ford appears to have been a vigilant hunter for any bibliographical prizes; and it was he through whose hands passed Milton’s copy of Browne’s *Britannia’s Pastorals*.²

The extremely legitimate hypothesis that special conditions of the nature suggested accelerated the appearance of

¹ Halliwell-Phillips. *Outlines*, 1886, ii. 91. The price of it was presumably four pence, as the other book, the *Survey of France*, 1592, was a much larger volume. See Notes at end.

² Browne’s Works, by Hazlitt, ii. xxi.

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Lucrece may be allowed to carry with it the inference, that that poem was composed in the country, that the author escaped from the danger of contagion by leaving London, not necessarily to go into Warwickshire, but to seek quarters for the time in some spot, where he could work without interruption. The detached hamlets, which were then separated even from the western side of the town itself by wide stretches of open country, afforded ready accommodation, and it would be interesting to learn, whether the poet bent his steps toward that group of suburban centres, where we already know that some of his personal friends, at least very soon after 1593, foregathered—Fulham and its environs—which even long after the time of the poet formed an agreeable neighbourhood.

The same visitation, which is credited with having afforded Shakespear a respite from theatrical pursuits in the metropolis, enabling him to carry out his literary work, and complete it for the press, led Edward Alleyn to make a provincial tour with his company in the Eastern counties. But there is no evidence that the poet and his fellows took a similar step; there is no local colouring in *Lucrece* to assist us. Shakespear, having ingratiated himself with Lord Southampton by the graceful and dutiful tribute before *Venus and Adonis*, might be naturally anxious to improve his standing with that promising young nobleman, and accordingly made *Lucrece*,¹ of which the subject matter had been growing familiar since 1570 in ballad and book, follow closely behind with a second and somewhat more confident address to the same personage. As a dramatist and actor, the poet could not fail to perceive the direct and indirect advantage calculated to accrue from friendly goodwill in such a quarter under many possible contingencies.

The citations of Francis Meres as a witness to the celebrity and appreciation of Shakespear in 1598, in his *Wit's*

¹ The copy, formerly Sir W. Tite's and F. Locker-Lampson's, at present before me, was found in a volume of law tracts, and was presented to Tite by a friend at Collumpton according to a MS. note by the recipient.

Treasury, printed in that year, and the marginal reference of William Clarke, in his *Polimantia*, 1595, to the Poems, then newly published, have this feature in common, that both were of academical origin; and *Hamlet*, as we know, was performed not only in London, but at Oxford and Cambridge. Only two years after the appearance of *Wit's Treasury*, another Oxford man, Charles Butler, Musical Doctor of Magdalen, issued his Two Books of Rhetoric in Latin, where he speaks of Shakespear as "tragicus, comicus, historicus"; but this learned gentleman evidently discovered no special value in him, except that he names him, and refers to his fellow-dramatists as *alii*, whereas of the lyrical poets he specifies several, including "Divinus illes vates Georgius Wither," but not the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*.

The association of Shakespear with University men in 1595-8, and the performance of *Hamlet* at Oxford and Cambridge, reminds me that Henry Willobie, author of *Avisa*, 1594, as well as his chamber-fellow, Hadrian Dorrell, were Oxford men, thus shewing a taste there for this class of literature. I affirm that I am no convert to the speculation, that Shakespear is to be viewed as the W.S. of Willobie's *Avisa*, 1594, any more than that *Avisa* herself is the veiled heroine of the *Sonnets*. I prefer to credit William Smith, a rather prolific verse writer about the same period, and equally a contributor to *England's Helicon*, 1600.

Although, however, Meres was a member of both universities, he seems to have been resident in London in or about 1598; for he dates his *God's Arithmetic*, 1597, from his chamber in St. Mary Botolph Lane; and he had relatives of good position in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Meres was by no means improbably a spectator at the performance of some of the plays, which he enumerates, and a reader of the Poems, if not of the "sugared" sonnets in MS., and he has proved of service in one or two cases in establishing the existence of a drama within his date. He was a student, who included all the most recent publications in his range,

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and he specifies all the most eminent verse writers of the day. Indeed we find him launching into verse himself, and prefixing a decastichon to a translation of Battista Alberto's *Art of Loue*, published in 1598 by William Leake, who was concerned in the *Venus and Adonis* of that date, and who had succeeded to the possession of the White Greyhound, where Shakespear had brought out, or Field for him, the first impression of that poem, so that one may regard Meres as hovering on the skirts of the literary set to which the great poet belonged. His enumeration is little better than a string of names, except that he tells us that Spenser "excelleth in all things," and that Anthony Munday is "the best plotter." He bestows a few lines on Shakespear, and he classes him with those who are "the most passionate among us to bewail and bemoan the perplexities of love." We perceive that he had just been studying this particular question a little. The author of *Polimanteia* describes [*Venus and Adonis*] as "Watson's heir," which is debateable. Whatever may be the merit of Watson, his mind and that of Shakespear were cast in different moulds. It is to be suspected that in his Sonnets published between 1581 and 1593 Watson attained the height of his intellectual possibility in any direction.

There is no reliable information on the circumstances, under which poems by Shakespear were inserted, in company with some by other pens, in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599, by William Jaggard. It was a small heterogeneous miscellany formed somewhat at random, and two of the Shakespearean pieces had appeared the year before in *Love's Labor's Lost*, but with variations, as from a different MS. source. One feature in the book is that it purported to be on sale by the same William Leake, whose name is similarly attached to the *Venus and Adonis* of 1598 and 1602, but not to those of 1593 and 1594, and that when it reappeared in 1612 with additions, it is said simply to be printed, not for, but by Jaggard, who, we note, places the supplementary matter below the name of Shakespear, so that it might be taken to be his or other-

wise. The peculiar association of the poet was not with Leake, but with Field, the Stratford man, who put the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* in type, and of whom we lose sight after 1596. Nor do we know whether the writer himself furnished to the volume by Chester, called *Love's Martyr*, or *Rosalin's Complaint*, 1601, the verses there found, or whether they were obtained through an indirect channel. It was, so far as we can judge, no part of Shakespear's plan to associate himself and his work with others, and that, too, at a period when joint authorship was quite a fashion. He constituted in his own person a type, of which he was the sole example.

But some lines are attached to a volume, which was printed (for the second time) in 1613, which have no actual signature, but so impressed me with the feeling that they can have proceeded only from one pen, that I first printed them as Shakespear's some years since (1903) in the first issue of my monograph, and I think that the attribution is generally accepted. They are not in the folio of 1608. I allude to the tribute prefixed to Florio's Montaigne:—

CONCERNING THE HONOR OF BOOKES.

Since Honor from the Honorer proceeds,
How well do they deserve that memorie
And leave in bookes for all posterities
The names of worthyees, and their vertuous deedes
When all their glorie els, like water weedes
Without their element, presently dyes,
And all their greatnes quite forgotten lyes :
And when, and how they florisht no man heedes
How poore remembrances are statutes toomes
And other monuments that men erect
To Princes, which remaine in closed roomes
Where but a few behold them ; in respect
Of Bookes, that to the vniversall eye
Shew how they liu'd, the other where they lye.

The offering, which was not necessarily the result of an appeal from Florio, and was possibly obtained by the ener-

getic and ubiquitous Blount, publisher of the book, may have been an afterthought and an insertion at the last moment. It follows a long copy of verses by Daniel of very inferior quality, and although by a more careful distribution of space the difficulty might have been obviated, it is so cramped at the foot of the page, that no room remained for a subscription, if any was furnished or intended. The want of particular application, as well as the typographical peculiarity, may have something to do with the residence of the poet at Stratford at this juncture; and the lines would be almost the latest, which came from his pen, assuming them to be his. They look back on all that he had accomplished toward the elevation of the book and its maker.

In the verses just quoted, which have (singularly enough) no specific bearing on the immediate subject-matter, and constitute a general homage to books, there is an unmistakable individuality absent from all other compositions of a similar stamp within my acquaintance. They breathe the air of a novice in the art of complimentary trifling, and display a sort of self-restraint due to the fear of going too far or saying too much. If the lines are really his, he seldom enough cast his thoughts in so contracted a mould. The singularity of the pointing, or want of it, strictly follows the original before me. The figurative employment of water-weeds in the fifth line has struck me as suggested to the poet by those to be seen, then probably as now, in the stream flowing behind New Place—a spectacle more than ever under his eyes since his retirement to his native place, but which he may well have constantly beheld, when he was a youth. Did he tickle trout there? There is a rather suggestive allusion in *Twelfth Night*.

The process of hypothetical ascription goes a step farther in a similar or analogous direction, and I am disposed to endorse the idea, that four lines beneath the portrait of James I. accompanying the Bishop of Winchester's edition of the King's Works in 1616, but not improbably in existence in a separate shape somewhat earlier, are due to that master-

pen, which had no longer a higher function to discharge. They are as follow :—

“Crounes have their compasse, length of dayes their date,
Triumphes their tombes, felicities ther fate :
Of more then earth, can earth make none partaker,
But knowledge makes the King most like his maker.”

There is the graceful tribute to the literary labours of his sovereign—the prince, from whom he had received personal recognition—almost homage, and there is an even keener sense of the prospect, which levels all distinctions. Granting them to be his, the two copies of verse exhibit a common anonymity and a common local origin ; they were doubtless equally Stratford products, and these on James I. would be absolutely his valedictory utterance. We cannot avoid noting the innuendo, that a king owed his rank to his own culture rather than to his Divine right, and we may collate the observation, which he puts in *Richard II.* into the King’s mouth.

Looking at the handsome tribute or homage to his genius offered by James I. to Shakespear in that still-to-be-recovered letter and otherwise, the poet’s persistent anti-monarchical pronouncements, were they not ungrateful ! Perchance his majesty failed to detect them, and had no one at his side willing or able to point them out.

We have explicit evidence of his perusal of Montaigne,¹ and he has transplanted into his own pages sentiments, of which the value and interest in his eyes perhaps induced him on its reappearance ten years later to honour the book in this unparalleled way.

It is within my knowledge that in 1591 lines attached to Florio’s *Second Fruits*, headed “Phaëton to his friend Florio,” have been almost accepted as from the same hand, and I quite subscribe to the internal marks of resemblance to those accompanying the Montaigne, which may be another mode of casting a doubt on the latter, since I feel very strongly,

¹ Particularly in the *Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, and the *Tempest*.

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that the prior tribute, though not too early for an acquaintance between the two men, is too early for a composition of the kind by Shakespear—is in fact better than anything undramatic which he is likely to have written in 1590-1; nor is the superscription characteristic. The verses before the Montaigne are pensive and concise, as they are unappropriated or anonymous. They read like the written thought of one, who was not in mid-career, in the heyday of life and activity, but who had reached the summit, and had a large retrospect.

On the contrary, a drama entitled *Phaëton* was written by Thomas Decker, and acted by the Lord Admiral's men in 1597-8, perhaps at the Rose theatre;¹ and I offer the suggestion that the author may have not inaptly adopted the name of the hero of his play in addressing a copy of verses to Florio, unless it was too early for Decker, whose first publication is dated 1598. *Phaëton*, however, is not specified as a new piece in that year; and Decker was working for the theatre at all events in 1594, when he completed his *Diocletian*. The mythological tale of *Phaëton* was not unlikely to have been simmering in the brain of Decker, then a young man, before he reduced it to form; and he may have made it the subject of conversation, till he dubbed himself or was familiarly dubbed by the name of his proposed hero, as Drayton is said to have borne among his intimates the *sobriquet* of Rowland, borrowed from the title to his *Idea*, 1593. Of the last-named poet we get a more favourable notion from the original painting at Dulwich than from the prints.

The poet was not to be coaxed or shamed into joining the vociferous phalanx, which wept over the last of the Tudors, and tendered its congratulations to the incoming Stuart, either by the mild reproof of Chettle, or even by the example of his cousin Greene, who penned an ephemeral panegyric upon the notable occasion. But here was a rebuke to him for his lukewarm enthusiasm at Stratford itself—at

¹ Hazlitt's *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, p. 221.

his very door, as it were; and in truth, whether he found himself in town or country at that particular juncture, he was apt to be equally twitted with his unpatriotic indifference. I do not even believe that the lines in the *Merry Wives*, referring to his sovereign, were really written by him; if they were, they are the worst which he ever composed, and perhaps for the very reason that such tributes were against the grain. Anne Page delivers them in the character of the *Fairy Queen*. They are not in the 4^o of 1602. I have seen them applauded as beautiful. But I think, that they must be bracketed with the passage in *Henry VIII.*, where Cranmer is made to foretell the long reign and the greatness of Elizabeth.

CHAPTER X

Shakespear's *Sonnets* considered—Their chronology—Their sequence—Crudity of their style—The dedication to Mr. William Hammond, under his initials, by Thorpe the finder and publisher—Impossibility of the Pembroke theory—Points in evidence and disproof—Analogous inscriptions—Enigmas in fashion in 1609—Vindication of Thorpe—The earliest real appreciator of the Poet—A MS. of Middleton's *Game of Chess* dedicated to W. Hammond—The dedicatee presumed to be of the family of Hammond of St. Alban's Court, Nonnington, Kent—That county shown to be in and before 1609 an unique literary centre—List of families residing there and their friends, Marlowe, Chapman, etc.—Source of the MSS. of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and *Lucan*—Association of Thorpe and of Edward Blount with this Kentish circle—Also of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, the Diarist—Chapman and the Walsinghams of Chislehurst—Careers of Thorpe and Blount traced—Both experts in *trouvailles*—Blount undertakes the publication of Florio's Montaigne, after it had lain by for some time—The version registered in 1595 not Florio's.

THE Sonnet and the Eclogue have ever been the two types of literary product, over the meaning and moral of which the writers of all ages seem to have thought fit to cast a veil of mystery and contradiction, and to create an inexhaustible field of controversy. Both classes of composition peculiarly lend themselves to hyperbole and fantastic or passionate extravagance. We peruse with a qualified interest the Virgilian Bucolics, thoroughly aware of the prevailing vein, and accepting with reserve the political and personal sentiments of the bard, as they are conveyed to us through the interlocutors; and it was in the year immediately succeeding the publication of *Venus and Adonis* here in England, that a young Staffordshire man, Richard Barnfield, produced, absolutely without any clue to the actual writer, a very poor and unreadable poem, in six-line stanzas, entitled the

Affectionate Shepherd. The Latin original strikes us, even with a knowledge of Roman manners, as preposterous enough: its English analogue is simply ridiculous, albeit Barnfield makes his boy love Ganymede solely for his *gifts*. But my allusion to these works was actuated by the desire and necessity of shewing, how far they partake in common of the structural weakness of a fabric disproportionate to its base, or of a literary fancy or even biographical incident overlaid under the author's hand by an afterbirth of casually developed conceits, and this, in the case of Shakespear, to a far larger extent than in that of the Staffordshire poet, owing perhaps to the extension of the work over a longer period. But both writers in a way follow the method of Virgil in making the leading character refer to former or current female attachments abandoned or unreciprocated. In the time of Elizabeth it was not unusual for one man to address another as his lover, nor was this practice confined to amatory poetry.

A survey of the dull and tedious poetical effusions given to the world during the Elizabethan era under this name leads a practical investigator to the unchangeable view, that there is no dependence on the authenticity of the sentiment or the homogeneous truth of the narrative. A large allowance has to be made for all those wilful and wanton artifices of composition and phraseology, which seem to be proper to this kind of work, and for all the capricious humours, of which the source and sense are apt to be latent in the mind of the writer, and to be lost with him, where he was led by temperament or other cause to maintain reserve concerning his literary methods and passing humours.

The Sonnets have constituted during the greater part of a century backward from the existing time—not from the date of their appearance, when, so far as we can tell, they excited no particular interest, and certainly awakened no curiosity as to their realism or otherwise—such a fruitful and favourite theme for speculation and comment that to propound anything fresh upon them and their character,

would itself be a kind of art. The origin, succession, and inner meaning of these productions have of recent years formed a sort of cult. The fame of the author as a playwright has united with the obscurity of his personal history to invest them with an importance, which their literary merit surely does not justify; and one proof of such a view may be allowed to lie in the circumstance, that the school of critics and biographers, which preceded the elevation of the Sonnets to this new and higher rank, did not even disguise its qualified estimate of their intrinsic value. Nor does it seem to have impressed critics down to quite modern times, that the series occupies a parallel standing to that, which we hold from other contemporary pens, where the artificial texture is owned by the writers themselves, and of which many circulated in MS. previous to their committal to type precisely in a similar way to Shakespear's.

The usual idea about the chronology of the Sonnets is that they were written after 1594 and prior to 1598, when they are said by Francis Meres to be extant in separate papers, and to be in the possession of friends—of those, it is fairly presumable, to whom they had been given, or for whom they had been designed. We have accidental evidence of that, which in the printed copy makes 94, being in existence in 1596; and in *Love's Labor's Lost*, 1598, two, if not three, make part of the text probably overseen by the dramatist himself. But the accessions to the store after the last-named date were doubtless very few, if more than a single one. They were precisely that kind of literary composition, which a poet would commit to paper from time to time, as the humour took him, or as he perceived the possibility of strengthening a passage or pursuing an imagery; and the acquaintance of Meres with them was ostensibly slight. He refers to them as *sugared*. A worse epithet could hardly have been chosen; but Weever seems to have had the term in his mind, when he in his *Epigrams*, 1599, used it toward the Lyrics of 1593-4 with an equal measure of unfitness. The Sonnets are certainly impassioned and

amatory; but they are also philosophical, misanthropic, bitter, sad, and weak. Although they did not appear in type in a collective form, till nearly the entire series of plays from the same pen was before the world, they virtually belong, for the most part, to the period when the author was temporarily dividing his energy between dramatic adaptation and lyrical poetry of an original cast, and it may perhaps be asked whether, had we not been admitted to an explicit knowledge, that these compositions were Shakespear's, we should have been able to find in them convincing evidence of his authorship. There is the slightest possible clue to the true order; but it is clear that an interval of some years elapsed between the earliest and the latest.

Inferentially the loose papers, of which Meres speaks in 1598 as distributed among Shakespear's friends, but which in some cases may have remained in his own hands during some time, were collected together by or for Thomas Thorpe, son of an innholder at Barnet, a man about thirty, a member of the Stationers' Company, and a person of superior intelligence and insight, and given to the printer in the order in which they present themselves in the 4° of 1609. No one, I believe, has ever beheld a duplicate of them, or any of them, in MS. within memory or even within tradition. The careless treatment of such things by the average Englishman almost warrants a belief in the possibility, that the copy was not received by the editor (Thorpe), after it had passed through numerous hands, in a very lucid state, and that he found it necessary to supply *lacunæ* arising from damage to the slips of paper, on which the series of stanzas was written, before he delivered the matter to the typographer or the publisher. Or, as an alternative, we may speculate, whether Thorpe did not judge it desirable to have the whole transcribed for press; and in either case we seem here to have the explanation of certain words and sentences, which do not strike us as genuine Shakespearean utterances, even supposing them to be anterior to the issue of *Palladis Tamia*.

Whatever is capable of being thought and urged against their biographical eloquence, it is not to be gainsaid that here we are confronted with a solid body of authentic material evolving from an intellect of a more than usually sound and practical order, and, if they do not fundamentally reflect the personal and private sentiments of the author, ostensibly raising and warranting the inquiry, what do they mean? It is not that they can be alleged to be free from exaggeration; but after all possible allowances have we not a germ of realism respondent to a riper and finer one in the dramas, each seeming to substantiate the other, common exponents of a domestic epic more melancholy than sublime.

The direct and personal element in certain writers is so clear as to be unchallenged. A vein of obvious egoism pervades all their work, and the nature of the subject permitted and suggested the treatment. But we have to bear in mind that this is apt to be an inherent tendency in all authors, and that generalization and selection are the result of training and self-constraint; and that even a dramatic author, much less a sonneteer, should deliver to the world neutral utterances without some private disclosures, is to ascribe to him a larger measure of heroic forbearance than he is likely to possess. Such touches in Shakespear as one suspects of having a bearing on himself are assuredly couched in terms apter to strike us than those, in whose sight or hearing they were penned or delivered. Attention is drawn in these pages to those very few cases where the poet has approached self-valuation, and when we consider that the Plays, even more than the Sonnets, afforded facilities for this personal trespass, it must be allowed that he availed himself of his opportunities in both instances frugally enough. He was even there too reserved for us, if not for his immediate readers or hearers.

The Sonnets were doubtless composed at intervals, under different impulses, at various levels of mood and temperament. There are a few notes of time and neighbourhood; here and there are touches which bespeak happier inspiration

or later workmanship; while of the literary history of the *Affectionate Shepherd* we know nothing more than is vouchsafed on the face of the pamphlet, which contains it. Yet this superficial material so far helps us, that it corroborates the widely different notions of those days, when a young poet takes up an equivocal theme and inscribes it under the *nom de plume* of Daphnis to a noble lady. But there is this vital difference, that, whereas in the case of Barnfield, the treatment is a mere imitation of a classical prototype, the Sonnets embody to a considerable extent a vague and incoherent rhapsody, in which the immediate writer, another person of the same sex, and a woman, are the persons of a sort of disjointed drama, and the woman is represented, first, as having refused the writer's suit and then as being wedded to the rival. But the disentanglement of the obscure and whimsical series of addresses is almost impossible, partly perhaps because we have not the true sequence, and partly because the text may be faulty. At best the collection is, as a whole, sadly disappointing. Yet, poor and weak as the Sonnets are, occasional lines or forms of expression remind us of the plays, and assist us to a recollection of whose writings these stanzas constitute part. It is certainly a debateable point, whether the whole of the MS. series is not to be regarded as posterior to the *Affectionate Shepherd*, 1594, the spirit and temper are so closely allied; and in my opinion much of the sentiment is equally ideal.

The *Affectionate Shepherd* keeps the classical model more in sight, and while the slender aggregate is at a deader level, the design is more consistently carried out, and the poetical contrast between the ages of the parties is even more strongly marked, as Shakespear claims a far slighter seniority to the youth in his mind's eye. Barnfield probably saw his performance through the press; Shakespear left his scattered effusions to be gathered up by a third party, and printed as they came to hand, without revision and without sequence. The two lyrics and perhaps the *Love's Labor's Lost*, 1598,

appear to have exhausted the patience of the poet as a corrector of the press, apart from his unseen hand in the texts, which form the folio of 1623.

Altogether, I have brought myself at least round to the conclusion and belief that the publication of the maiden effort of Barnfield, who in some verses printed in 1598 intimated his warm appreciation of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, was the immediate initiative of Shakespear's experiments as a sonneteer, and had it not been for the junior poet we might not have had the volume by his contemporary in our hands at the present moment. Such a view harmonizes with the generally accepted chronology of the Shakespear legacy, which, as I point out, departs from the lines observed by Barnfield in obedience to his classical prototype, and indulges in vague and mysterious innuendoes, of which the dissolved essence amounts to little more than a slight enrichment of the scanty biography.

Shakespear had no proved, or even probable, hand in sending his Sonnets to the press, much less in arranging or revising them, or in warranting the dedicatory Epistle. The *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* owed their publication to his personal agency, and were entrusted to the care of his fellow-townsmen, Richard Field. In the late autumn of 1608—the latter half of October—he was undoubtedly at Stratford, where his mother had died in the beginning of September, and where he attended the christening of his godchild, William Walker, in the following month; at this point of time the Sonnets, though dated 1609, were doubtless in the press, at any rate in the hands of Thorpe, with an immediate view to utilization. The absence of Shakespear from London in 1608, even if it was unusually prolonged by reason of his anxiety to learn the result of the visit of Greene to the metropolis in October on his (and perhaps other) business, rendering his personal presence at Stratford convenient, was only temporary. He was, in any case, within reach; but it was assuredly familiar enough to “the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth,” that had he approached the

person most directly interested, he might have found him neutral in the matter.

Thorpe does not only not suggest that he acted with the author's cognizance, but subscribes with his own initials the fantastically worded dedication to Mr. W. H., taking credit to himself for setting forth the volume—a claim by no means allowable beyond the imminent danger, had he not intervened, that the MS. or MSS. would have completely disappeared. We discern no higher or other merit in the stationer; and it is the more regrettable and unpardonable, inasmuch as Thorpe appears to have been a man of more than average standing, who might have served us all by making the story clear, instead of handing us a senseless and nearly insoluble puzzle. At the same time the whole cast of the preliminaries almost forbids the suspicion of any servile or venal motive toward the author.

While no duplicate texts of any of the series are known, or have been cited as formerly existing, it is even a matter of certainty that various copies of at least some were executed under circumstances not at present ascertainable. For two, which are intrinsically as much a part of the collection as those belonging to the 4° of 1609, meet the eye in *Love's Labor's Lost* in 1598, and recur in the *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599, with textual differences sufficiently material to justify the assumption of two independent sources of supply. Regarding the rather exceptional circumstances attendant on the publication of this particular drama, which actually seems to have received touches from the hand of the author, the readings of the 4° of *Love's Labor's Lost* are apt to strike one as more authoritative than those of a book produced under such equivocal conditions as the *Pilgrim*. The main point, however, is that an ostensibly new and enlarged view of the question is created by the reasonable inference, that this book, as it was put into type in 1609, was not only incorrectly arranged, but failed to represent all that Shakespeare had written of this nature. For if the recovery of the actual contents of the 1609 volume was fortuitous, the pre-

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ervation of the two items not printed there was equally so; nor do we know how many others there may have been, scattered here and there, and never regained. We readily perceive that Jaggard, instead of appropriating the sonnets introduced into the play, obtained other transcripts, and that the Editor of 1609—ten years later—made use of neither, although this pair of stanzas presents the aspect of conveniently falling into the text of the *Sonnets* after No. 152. Beyond them there is the letter in Act iv., sc. 3, of *Love's Labor's Lost*, thrown into metrical form, and making rather more than the canonical number of lines, yet which strikes one as having been a composition lying by the author, like the two others, and taken into service on the first opportunity.

Thorpe addresses Mr. W. H. as the sole Begetter of the Sonnets. Assuredly, if he comprehended the generally accepted meaning of a common word, he wished to signify that this gentleman was exclusively instrumental in inducing the poet to write them; for the difference between the forms *beget* and *get* is intrinsically unimportant, and neither bore or will bear in this case the forced meaning of mere acquisition. That such was the truth few things, however, are less probable. The series is only such to us; it was composed at different times, under different moods, and with different persons or incidents in the mind's eye; and we are almost compelled to speculate, whether Thorpe was actually ignorant, when he obtained the MS. or MSS., of the circumstances, under which it or they had been composed. Although he lived so near to the publication of the *Palladis Tamia* of Meres in 1598, and received into his hands the unprinted Sonnets from a person presumably conversant with their nature and history, communications were then so amazingly imperfect and accidental, that Thorpe may have been as unaware that W. H. was merely a gatherer of material, as Shakespear himself was in 1612-13, that a stationer had put forth as his work poems from another pen within the same twelvemonth. Whether Thorpe printed

the book exactly as it came to his hands, *plus* title-page and dedication, without any editorial interference, and whether the omission of certain matter, as above indicated, was due to the negligence of the actual collector of the MSS., we want fuller information, before we can decide. But it is not easy to understand in either case how the editor could have been unaware of the two sonnets already twice in type, and so naturally pertinent to the subject-matter.

So long ago as 1874¹ the present writer adduced an apparently new and a rather strong piece of evidence to demonstrate the more than unlikelihood of a person in the position of Thorpe venturing to address a nobleman in the terms of the dedication of 1609, and set side by side two dedicatory epistles by him, one to John Florio in 1610, and another to *William Earl of Pembroke* in 1616, exhibiting most conclusively the contrast in the relations toward the literary man and the peer. In the epistle to Florio, Thorpe signs himself: "Yours in true hearted love, T. T."; but in that to his lordship he writes: "Your Lordships humbly devoted, T. Th."; and, moreover, in the latter case he rehearses all Lord Pembroke's titles, while in the former he signalizes Florio as "a true favourer of forward spirits." John Healey, translator of the *Epictetus* and other works, was evidently in touch during his life with the Earl of Pembroke, and not only with Thorpe, but with Edward Blount, son of Ralph Blount, merchant tailor of London, a stationer or publisher, of whom I shall have a good deal more to say. An English version of Rabelais had been licensed in 1592 and again in 1594; but nothing farther is known of it. But in 1605, as we learn, not from the book, but from the Stationers' Register, Blount was one of two persons concerned in issuing a strange Rabelaisian volume by Healey, purporting to be a translation of Bishop Hall's *Mundus Alter et Idem*, called: "The Discovery of a New World, or A Description of the South Indies." This Healey dedicated in terms implying favours already received from

¹ *Prefaces, Dedications, Epistles*, 1874, pp. 226-9.

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the Earl of Pembroke, so that we hold in our hands in this case a work indicating the sort of link between Blount and Thorpe on the one hand and the Herberts of Wilton on the other. The peroration of the Epistle Dedicatory is redolent of the air of mystery, which surrounds other publications just about this juncture, and the text displays a whimsical and ebullient luxuriance of fancy worthy of the Frenchman. But it is interesting to consider that Healey, who refers to himself as the *Cambridge Pilgrim*, may not only have witnessed the performance of *Hamlet* at that university in 1602, but have met the author, who, however, must have gained from some other source his knowledge of Rabelais, as he is mentioned in *As You Like It*. Quite possibly, if he was in London, one of his foreign acquaintances, or, if in Stratford, the Combes or the Quineys.

But beyond these points we note that, in inscribing the 1616 book to the Earl, Thorpe thought it necessary or judicious to emphasize his sense of the liberty, which so mean a man used in encroaching on the privacy of a personage of such high station and such scanty leisure, and pleaded, that he took the step at the prayer of the departed author, who regarded his lordship as "the true and real upholder of learned endeavours." A few lines lower down, the obsequious stationer reiterates his sense of the vast disparity of rank in the words: "pardon my presumption, great Lord, from so mean a man to so great a person."

Yet in 1609—seven years prior, but when Lord Herbert had succeeded to the superior title by the death of his father in 1601 about eight or nine years—this same Thorpe, as we are invited, if not required, to believe, approached him as "Mr. W. H.," and precisely in the kind of strain, which in 1610 he deemed, and rightly deemed, appropriate in dealing with a man of letters, who was, no doubt, a more or less intimate acquaintance.

It has been pleaded in an analogous case that William Kemp the actor inscribed his *Nine Days' Wonder*, 1600, in

very familiar language to Anne Fitton, who, as well as her younger sister Mary, was one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour. In the first place, the Fittons—the two ladies of that name—appear to have been unusually affable, and, secondly, the terms of Kemp's epistle are not wanting in deference. He addresses himself "To the true Ennobled Lady, and his most bountifull Mistris," and concludes with "Your worthy Ladiships most vnworthy servant." He gives her her maiden name; but she was at this time Lady Newdegate. The Fitton sisters were what would be now designated *free and easy* or even *fast* people; and Lady Penelope Rich, whose name Barnfield associated with his *Affectionate Shepherd*, was a personage of the same stamp, who had been strenuously courted on paper after her marriage in 1581 by no less a person than Sydney, and it has been held that she served him in some measure as a lay figure for his *Stella*. Barnfield subscribes a couple of dedicatory stanzas "To the Right Excellent and most beautifull Lady, the Ladie Penelope Ritch," and below we read: "Your Honour's most affectionate and perpetually devoted Shepheard, Daphnis." A mere lad of twenty was more familiar in his tone toward Lady Penelope than Kemp toward Lady Newdegate. The former was the daughter of Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, and sister of the nobleman, who is so repeatedly mentioned in these pages. She married in 1581 Robert, Baron Rich, who subsequently became Earl of Warwick, but was divorced from him in consequence of her improper intimacy with Charles Blount, Baron Mountjoy, afterward Earl of Devonshire. She died in 1607. She had married at 20; in 1594 she was 33; it was an age, when a woman of rare personal attractions was capable of impressing a man many years her junior.

Enigmatical and, as we should perhaps judge, eccentric addresses were even about the earlier Stuart time not unfrequent. The theatre itself had contributed to level social distinctions in certain ways. But the fashion and licence had set in during the reign of Elizabeth, and the present

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may be, on the whole, the best place for mentioning an example. In 1599 Anthony Gibson edited a translation from the French by Anthony Munday of a piece called *A Woman's Worth*; it is perhaps observable that it is dedicated to Elizabeth, Countess of Southampton; but the two auxiliary points about the book are that, (1) on the title-page it is said to be "written [? translated] by one that hath heard much, seene much, but knowes a great deale more," which occult declaration is succeeded by Munday's familiar motto: *Patere aut abstine*; and (2) that of the four introductory sonnets by Gibson, one is addressed to Mary Fitton, who thus seems to have still maintained her ground in the world of fashion and letters and her situation at Court. Moreover, at the masque celebrated at the Russells' house in Blackfriars, June 16, 1600, to celebrate the marriage of Mistress Anne Russell to Henry, Lord Herbert, son of Edward, Earl of Worcester, the Queen, who honoured the ceremony with her presence, took her place in a dance, her partner being Mistress Fitton, who personified Affection. The contemporary account runs, that the lady wooed the Queen to dance, and Elizabeth asked who she was. "Affection," replied the mask. "Affection is false," returned her highness, yet nevertheless she rose, and danced.

Other members of the family were long more or less mixed up with public matters, and in 1595 a certain E. C. inscribed his volume of Sonnets to Edward Fitton, Esquire.

In the epistle before some copies of *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609, to which I must again refer, there is the quaint superscription: "A neuer writer to an euer reader—Newes," of the authorship of which internal evidence points to Thorpe, and a preface to a historical tract of 1607 connected with the Netherlands (B. M. Cat. 1077, d. 59) is headed; "Newes to the Reader, or to whom the Buyer desires to send Newes," and the signature at end is: "Thine, W. BB." In forming an opinion on a matter belonging to a particular era, we have to throw ourselves back into that era, so far as we are

enabled, and not commit the error of measuring our ancestors by our own standard.

It strikes me, nevertheless, as out of keeping with what we know of the relation of literary men of any class, especially of dramatists and poets, to the aristocracy at this time, to assume, that Shakespear would venture to control directly or otherwise the marriage of Lord Herbert; and it is to be always borne in mind that that nobleman was a very young man indeed, when the *Sonnets* were published, and scarcely more than a child, when many of them were written and circulating in MS. He became Earl of Pembroke at one-and-twenty in 1601. The champions of the Herbert theory have gone so far as to cite the passage in *Much Ado about Nothing* :—

"Beat. . . . By my troth, I am exceeding ill, heigho !

"Mary. For a hawk, a horse, or a husband ?

"Beat. For the letter that begins them all, H."

and are so good as to assure us that H stands for Herbert. This is certainly as audacious and reckless a trespass on the impersonality of the plays, which we are elsewhere instructed to credit and respect, as can be conceived. I hold that the *Sonnets* by no means necessarily represent a collection with any single individual in view, nor do I grant that there is any undermeaning or plan. When Shakespear had a man in view—even a man so very young as Lord Southampton was in 1593—he is masculine, straightforward, laconic, yet deferential. There is no vestige of pseudo-Platonism.

One clear ground of preference for the piratical origin of the volume may be thought to be the readiness of Shakespear, ever so apathetic in the unfair treatment by printers and publishers of his literary property, to tolerate the transaction of Thorpe, so long as it was confined to the familiar disregard of copyright, by which Shakespear was of course only a common sufferer: but it is highly questionable, whether even his forbearance would have extended so far as to allow the association of such a book with Lord Pembroke,

had he really been the hero or subject of it. That he was, is a perfectly modern theory dating from about 1830, and I do not hesitate to pronounce it an excessively absurd one.

Thorpe was the publisher of a rather wide range of books, and in coming across the manuscript of the *Sonnets*, he merely followed a practice not uncommon in those, and even in later, days; but, although we should not have been much poorer without them, Thorpe took no greater liberty than the printers of some of the plays had already done, notably the *Yorkshire Tragedy* printed as Shakespear's, and as having been performed at his own theatre in 1608, presumably during the poet's absence in the country, without admitting on his behalf the premises, that he had a confederate in the background, to wit the author.

It would be a severe injustice to Thorpe to omit or refuse to concede that credit to the promoter of the book, which it strikes me that he eminently deserves, as the first person who appears to have presaged the enduring fame of the author. He terms him *Our Ever-Living Poet*; and he so terms him in 1609, subsequently to the far less emphatic tribute by Jonson in *Poetaster* in 1602, but years before Jonson pronounced his eulogium in the folio of 1623, and years upon years before any one else dreamed of taking such a view, or forming such an estimate; and even if this testimony should be held to apply to the *Sonnets* only, there is the passage in the Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, published in the same twelvemonth, where the writer—Thorpe, I insist—says: "And believe this, when he is gone, and his *Comedies out of sale*, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition." Shakespear had at earlier dates been warmly commended by many admirers, but merely in the same sense and measure, that others received general or specific encomiums on their performances. The more emphatic and unqualified language of Thorpe was, and is, to be interpreted in a manner far more correspondent with modern ideas than it was with the ideas of the most ad-

vanced judges of the poet's own day. The literary speculator was immensely before his time, and in four words defined the permanent station of Shakespear, when he had given to the world nearly all that he had to offer, more accurately even than Dryden in that very perspicacious notice, which forms part of his *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, 1668, and to which he returns a little in the preface to his *Juvenal* in 1693. For anything approaching our present measurement of the poet the latter was in his own time mainly indebted to those literary rivals, whose animosity spoke for itself, and to the precocious judgment of the publisher of the *Sonnets*. From his immediate friends, so far as one is enabled to form a conclusion, the praise was faint and scanty; even his father saw in him mainly "a good honest fellow."

I scarcely think that Thorpe would have agreed with his friend Blount in considering Lyly "the only rare poet of that time," and here at least the term could not be otherwise than dramatically construed. There are two points in the title-page of the *Sonnets* soliciting attention. The first is the laconic structure of their introductory leaf, almost recalling the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and the variation in copies, where the book is said to be on sale at different addresses. Thorpe, in fact, as was his custom, placed his venture in the hands of others for disposal concurrently; he was the middleman, who did not take the money over the counter. Whether he invited Shakespear to accept any, I decline to guess.

The identity of Thorpe is as clear as the ostensible and arguable improbability of his approach to a nobleman on his own account, not as in the case, where he sheltered himself under the request of a deceased author, with a familiar air entirely out of accord with his own practice and feeling in 1616 and with the usage of the time. Failing the acceptance of *W. H.* as the initials of William Herbert, who succeeded to the earldom in 1601, critics and biographers have proposed other solutions of what is a riddle only to us. In an old sale catalogue of C. J. Stewart the bookseller, a

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MS. of one of Middleton's *Game at Chess* is found dedicated to *Mr. William Hammond*. William Hammond of St. Alban's Court, Nonnington, Kent, afterward knighted, and apparently living in 1619, had a son of the same name, born in 1614, who was not only related to Thomas Stanley and George Sandys the poets, but in 1655 published a volume of verse on his own account. These Nonnington Hammonds were persons with a literary environment and even taste, and in the absence of absolute proof, but looking at all the circumstances, it is plausible that the dedicatee of the *Game at Chess* was of that stock, yet the elder gentleman of that name apparently died before the play was produced, although he was living as Mr. William Hammond in 1609, while his son was too young, a mere boy, when it saw the light, to have recommended himself to any one for such a purpose. The objection and difficulty lie in the circumstance, that we fail, possibly from insufficient evidence, to see, how Hammond could be the only begetter of the *Sonnets*; and on the other hand, the survival of the Middleton MS. was perfectly fortuitous, and was perhaps only one link in a chain. The Hammonds of St. Alban's Court, if this William Hammond was of their stock (the elegiac writer, James Hammond, was a descendant) might have told us the whole story; and gratified—or disappointed—us by solving the problem.

There is, however, a good deal more than a pretence to a chain of evidence, lending us courage to form a somewhat more favourable opinion of the Kentish and Hammond theory. Besides the Hammonds of Nonnington and their near connections above-mentioned, there were the Walsinghams and Camdens of Chislehurst,¹ the Walsinghams' relatives the Manwoods of St. Stephens or Hackington, Canterbury, the Chewtes and Derings of Surrenden, the Manningshams of East Malling, the Chapmans of Godmersham,² connected

¹ Sir Nicholas Bacon, father of the great Bacon, and himself a great man, was a native of Chislehurst.

² A copy of Lambard's *Kent*, 1576, now before me, has the contemporary autograph of Thomas Chapman—? his neighbour at Godmersham.

with the poet who, again, had an intimate friend in Matthew Roydon (one of two brothers of literary taste and reputation), the Lambardes of Westcombe and Sevenoaks,¹ the Goldwells and perhaps the Tokes of Godington, the Oxindens of Dene or Barham, near Canterbury, and the Twysdens² of East Peckham—all people of culture. With the Walsinghams Christopher Marlowe had been on intimate terms, and was at their house, when an order was given for his arrest in connection with his so-called atheistical opinions—opinions not, it appears, confined to him, but more or less shared by Kyd the playwright and others.³ He eluded the holder of the warrant, and died at Deptford, whither he had repaired, perhaps, to the house of a resident relative, Anthony Marlowe,⁴ at the close of May, 1593, leaving behind him certain unpublished MSS.

Five years later, Edward Blount the stationer, having obtained, as I reasonably conclude, from the Walsinghams, independently or through their common friend George Chapman, all that the deceased dramatist had finished of his version of *Hero and Leander*, hastily published it—the first and second Sestiad—while the interest and curiosity in the unhappy case of the translator was yet fresh. But Chapman, having been requested or having proposed to complete the work, did so in a somewhat rapid manner, and in the same year Blount was enabled to issue a second impression, he inscribing the two Sestiyads (Marlowe's) to Sir Thomas Walsingham, and Chapman the remainder to Lady Walsingham. The speed with which the work was executed, extended to the press, for of the only two copies known of the full version, 1598, one exhibits marks of having been

¹ The library has been (1902) sold; but I fear that some of the books—notably a *Horæ* of York use—had long disappeared.

² In 1704 this family seems to have still maintained a good position. In that year Wycherley presented a large paper copy of his *Miscellaneous Poems*, a folio volume accompanied by a portrait of himself as a young man, "to the fairest lady in Kent, Mistress Jane Twysden."

³ *My Inedited Poetical Miscellanies*, 1870, *Notes*.

⁴ Ingram, *Christopher Marlowe and his Associates*, 1904, p. 241.

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partly reset, and the name *Leander* on the other is spelled *Leandr*. Some idea of the intimacy between Blount and Walsingham may be formed from the Epistle of the former before the *Hero and Leander*, where he speaks of the death of "our friend." The subjoined extract from that address might suggest, that Blount had joined in paying the last tribute to Marlowe: "when we haue brought the breathles bodlie to the earth: for albeit the eie there taketh his euer fare-well of that beloued object, yet the impression of the man, that he hath been deare vnto vs, liuing, an after life in our memorie, there putteth vs in minde of further obsequies due vnto the deceased. . . . I suppose my selfe executor to the unhappie deceased author of this Poem, vpon whom, knowing that in his life time many kind fauours . . . so I cannot see so far into the will of him dead that what soeuer issue of his braine should chance to come abroad, that the first breath it should take might be the gentle aire of your liking." He adds that the unfinished tragedy had happened under his hands to be imprinted, referring to the imperfect issue in 1598. But Blount appears to have retained an interest in the book down to 1617.

Chapman expresses himself in terms of gratitude to her ladyship; and in 1605 he prefixed to his *All Fools* a dedicatory sonnet to her husband not found in all copies.¹ *All Fools* was published for Thomas Thorpe; and the same person brought out the *Gentleman Usher* in 1606 and the *Byron* in 1608. I should not add here a particular reference to the second edition of Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Mind*, 1604, if it were not the case, that it possesses a copy of laudatory verses by Jonson, that it has a second title-page introducing an Addition occasioned by the death of Queen Elizabeth, with the name of Thorpe as the stationer (not vendor), and that it is dedicated to Shakespear's Southampton.

¹ It was in the Collier and Ouvry copy, sold among Ouvry's books in 1882, and had been apparently acquired from Rodd the bookseller. The cause of its omission or withdrawal has to be discovered.

The original association of Chapman the poet with Kent is attributable, in the presence of the greatest darkness respecting many points of his early life, to his presumed relationship with the Chapmans of Godmersham—indeed Anthony Wood thought him to be a Kentish man; and this Godmersham branch was related to the Mannings, who had at one time belonged to Hertfordshire.¹ Of the Mannings the representative at this time was John Manningham, from an entry in whose *Diary* Mr. Hunter first discovered in 1828 the fact, that *Twelfth Night* had been performed in the Middle Temple Hall in 1601-2, the drama having been so far regarded as a later composition. So we gradually repeople the Kent of Shakespear's day with a circle distinguished by its literary sympathy and its friendly contact with such men as Marlowe and Chapman, although we have yet to await some clearer and more explicit proof of any direct approximation of Shakespear to the set beyond casual greetings at common rendezvous; and the reader may be farther reminded, that one of these notable centres in Kent, as he knew it, was the home of the Oxindens, where the first ascertained attempt to form a collection of the early quartos is proved to have been made; and that the Manwoods possessed a library of contemporary literature (MSS. inclusive), the occasional occurrence of books with their autographs and arms and other indications sufficiently establishes. It was Sir Peter Manwood of these days, who encouraged Richard Knolles, apparently a Sandwich man, to undertake his *History of the Turks*, published in 1603. Thomas, his eldest son, was an intimate and valued friend of William Browne, who consecrated to his memory the fourth eclogue of the *Shepherd's Pipe*, 1614. The Manwoods, in fact, originally sprang from a Sandwich stock, and Sir Peter represented the borough in Parliament several times, notably in 1601, when he may have fallen in with Knolles. He was

¹ Inversely the Bacons of Chislehurst, Kent, transferred themselves to Hertfordshire, where Bacon's father founded the family seat at Gorham-bury, near St. Albans.

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not only a person of culture, but a fosterer of it in others. In 1561, his father, Sir Roger, had filled the part of the lord chief baron in the masque of *Palaphilos* at the Middle Temple. A nephew, John Manwood, published a well-known work on Forest Law in 1598, having issued it previously in a private form; and he married a lady of his own county.

Kent thus appears to gain an inedited literary and even Shakespearean interest cognate to that already claimed for some of the southern and western outskirts of London, and for one or two points in the Midlands, Coventry and Warrington, about the same point of time.

It happened two years subsequently to the acquisition by Blount of the MS. of *Hero and Leander*, that his friend Thorpe fell in with a second posthumous relic of Marlowe, equally fragmentary, namely, a linear version of the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Ostensibly this discovery was made elsewhere; the Lucan and the Musæus were in different hands, or the possessor of the latter was not aware of the fact, till perhaps Thorpe drew his attention to the matter. At any rate, Thorpe, not Blount, found the Lucan, and seems to have entered into a negociation with more than one stationer, or to have formed more than one plan, before he issued the poem separately in 1600 with an introductory epistle to Blount, whom he expressly preferred to a nobler patron, and to whom he acknowledges prior indebtedness. The original notion about the appearance of the Lucan in print had been that it should be annexed to the republication of *Hero and Leander* in 1600; and it is actually specified on the title-page of that volume as part of the contents. All this tends to exemplify and define the relations between Blount and Thorpe, Blount still retaining his interest in the Musæus, although his name does not occur in every impression. These two men of business were evidently of somewhat congenial and cognate pursuits. During many years the former had no settled address, but, like Thorpe, deposited volumes on sale with a third party; and, as we have observed, he enters first on the scene. In that very

year 1600 he had had the opportunity of returning the compliment paid to him by his *confrère*, when he brought out in 1600 an anonymous version of a work by Conestagio on the annexation of Portugal to Spain by Philip II. in 1580; but he preferred to associate the undertaking with Lord Southampton, whom he informs that the translator was his (Blount's) respected friend and a gentleman much devoted to his Honour. Beyond this imperfect disclosure he does not venture; perhaps he did not wish the friend to stand between him and his lordship. Blount had forsaken for the moment his Kentish acquaintances, and was treading on new ground—that first opened by Shakespear himself in 1593.

There is no other peculiarity about this course than the certainly uncustomary proceeding in the case of the Lucan of the inscription by one bookseller (Thorpe) to a second (Blount) of a volume bearing the imprint of a third (Burre). Thorpe in 1600 plays the same anomalous part as he in 1609 played in regard to the Sonnets of Shakespear, where he figures, as we all know, as the "well-wishing adventurer," and similarly confines himself to the employment of agents for retailing purposes. This principle he seems to have generally followed at a later period, for a tract relating to the affairs of the Netherlands, 1618, is said on the title to be "printed by G. E. for Th: Th: and Richard Chambers"—the latter a name, with which I am not otherwise familiar. Thorpe here employs Eld, the printer of the Sonnets, to execute this small volume, and keeps his own identity a sort of secret, leaving Chambers to appear as the salesman.

The preliminary inscription to Chapman's *Byron* offers the auxiliary interest of being likewise addressed to Sir Thomas Walsingham and his son and namesake jointly; and here the dramatist signalizes Sir Thomas as his honourable and constant friend, and compliments them both on their taste and scholarship, which placed them above "our ignorant gentlemen." In 1605 Thorpe was beginning to lay

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his hands on MSS. of Chapman, Jonson, and Coryat, with or without an understanding with the authors; and in the year immediately previous one of Jonson's pieces had been first entered to Blount, who transferred it to Thorpe, the latter issuing it with a metrical commentary by Chapman on the drama.

We seem altogether to make out an intimacy at least from 1593 between the Walsinghams, Christopher Marlowe, George Chapman, Edward Blount, and Thomas Thorpe. All these were in different senses in touch with each other, Marlowe of course dropping out of the circle at an early stage; and Thorpe had too keen a nose for eligible finds to leave a stone unturned, if Blount or himself heard of any commodity within reach likely to take the public. The former had no deficiency of assurance, for in 1605 he acquired the MS. of a small volume by Robert, afterward Sir Robert, Dallington, printed it without the author's knowledge, and then dedicated it to him!¹

The deduction, which arises from this preamble is, that the Musæus and Lucan, either one or both, were found at Chislehurst (with other papers) after the death of Marlowe, having been taken or sent thither by the poet, or that, the former having occurred in the hands of the Walsinghams,

¹ It is perhaps worthy of remark that neither Blount nor Thorpe laid his hands on Marlowe's *Dido* or *Edward II.*, both printed in 1594, the former with an Elegy on the author by Nash, or on the *Jew of Malta*, licensed for the press in the same year, and consequently available, but, so far as we are aware, not published, till it was edited in 1633 by Thomas Heywood from a version performed at Court about 1625, no contemporary text being perhaps even then extant. See farther my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, p. 163, where I make out that a drama on the subject of Mutius Scævola may have been among Marlowe's posthumous papers. The *Dido*, like the *Hero and Leander*, was incomplete, and was finished by Nash, although the title might lead to the supposition that the play was the joint composition of the two dramatists. We do not know when Marlowe executed his translation of some of Ovid's *Elegies*; but it does not seem to have been comprised in the finds after his death, nor was his English version of the second *Rape of Helen* by the Greek epic poet Coluthus of Lycopolis from the Latin of Thomas Watson, printed in 1586. Comp. Notes under *Titus Andronicus*.

the other may have been preserved at their kinsfolk the Manwoods', whom Marlowe equally knew. These may be more or less plausible inferences; but it enters more into the nature of an hypothesis without question, whether the Shakespear MS. was similarly deposited at Nonnington, the residence of the Hammonds, and at a considerable distance from Chislehurst, and in what manner and sense a member of that family was instrumental in "begetting" the collection, as we have it in type, for there had been a lengthened lapse of time between the find of the Lucan and that of the Sonnets; and, again, the latter stood in a materially different position, since they were, according to our sole available information, scattered in various quarters, and therefore demanded at least the process of being brought together, a service, which we are instructed by Thorpe, that we owe to Mr. W. H. Thorpe had at intervals secured sundry MSS. by other writers, keeping his hands tolerably full down to 1608: in his eyes a literary production was mainly printer's copy; and the approximation to the begetter or collector of the Sonnets, in the same range of country (as I dare to contend) as the Marlowe and Lucan, occurred at a juncture, perhaps, when he was looking out for a new speculation. He was a man, who manifestly, in spite of his excellent wishes, was no Quixote; for the *Sonnets*, with its forty leaves or eighty pages, cost him more than he felt he was justified in dispensing to the public at a groat, and he fixed the publishing price most unusually at fivepence, as attested by two contemporary evidences. Thomas May's *Heir*, 1633, is marked on the title, however, by a contemporary buyer as having cost him the same amount.

Independently of the Marlowe and Shakespear, and the two issues of Healey's Epictetus merely interesting to us from their Shakespearean bearing, Thorpe is answerable, as I have shown, for several other ventures of more or less trifling bulk, and his career extended down to 1625. Blount and he were evidently on good terms during all these years; in 1613 we find the former assigning to his friend a small

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volume by Humphrey King, almost as if he had doubts of its saleable virtue. A more complete acquaintance with his personal fortunes might have revealed something unexpectedly useful; but we hear nothing farther of him, and he died in 1635 in an almshouse. Forsooth, though the actual facts are unknown to us, he merited a better fortune—he who had delivered that unique emphatic verdict on the fame of Shakespear, which the poet can scarcely have failed to see in print—perhaps not quite with indifference, nor quite with incredulity. Some of his enterprizes do not strike one as peculiarly happy or intelligible; but, no doubt, he knew his business. In 1613 he had brought out a new edition of Nash's *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, one of the dullest productions of a very able writer. Nash had long been dead, and was scarcely recollected in 1613, as we recollect him to-day.¹

The career of Blount was distinguished by several literary events, of which two have a clear and direct bearing on Shakespear at a time anterior, not to the completion, but to the issue of the Sonnets, while a third concerned the posthumous folio of 1623. In 1601 appeared a strange composite volume, now of extraordinary rarity, principally made up of a translation by Robert Chester of an Italian poem, to which he gave the title of *Love's Martyr or Rosalin's Complaint*, and of a second composition on the legend of Arthur, described as the maiden essay of a new British author. At the end, however, occurs an appendix or supplement, which forms the real value and interest of the book in the shape of original verses by Shakespear, Marston, Chapman, and Jonson, those by Shakespear extending to eighteen stanzas. A peculiarity of this book, apart from the circumstance that it was a more ambitious undertaking than the *Museus*, running in fact nearly to two hundred pages, was the absence of any place of sale and indeed of any vendor, for at

¹ I am unable to trace Thorpe or his representatives, unless he was of kin to the William Thorpe, bookseller at Chester, of whom an engraved business card, dated 1661, is extant.

the foot of the title-page we meet only with: *London Imprinted for E. B. 1601.* Here we appear to have the fruit of another and more extensive and varied *trouvaille*, in which Thorpe had no visible interest or hand; the contributions from the pens of Shakespear and other eminent poets had been acquired piecemeal, perchance through his acquaintance Chapman; and the Arthurian subject-matter of the portion by "the new writer" recommended it to adoption rather than Chester's own work or his name. The stanzas by Shakespear must be taken to have belonged to the same body of floating material as the Sonnets, *A Lover's Complaint*, and the fragments in the *Pilgrim*; they are obviously early work—inferior even to the *Sonnets*; and they had probably strayed from the author's hands in common with the rest of the scattered papers gradually recovered and printed with or without leave.

Blount was ever on the book-hunting track. In 1608 he secured the MS. of *Pericles*; and could have authoritatively told us whence he derived it, and how far Shakespear was concerned. He was by possibility uncertain, whether his MS. was the sole one in existence, for he entered it as a precaution at Stationers' Hall on May 20. But he did not proceed any farther, and surrendered the copyright to another stationer, who brought out two impressions in the following year. Blount seems scarcely to have possessed that sort of literary sensibility evinced by Thorpe. As far back as 1603 he had begun to traverse the rights of Simon Waterson, Daniel's usual publisher, by bringing out several of the minor pieces of that writer, and this he continued to do till 1607.

Another and later achievement was one of far greater magnitude and of a wholly different nature. It was the English version of Montaigne, of which enough has already been heard, and which might never have appeared, had the one projected by Edward Aggas in 1595 been duly executed. It could not have been worse than Florio's; and from the long experience of Aggas it would probably have been

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superior. Again, in 1612, Blount was instrumental in introducing to the world the earliest English version of *Don Quixote* by Thomas Shelton; but the whole work was not completed till 1620. Shelton apparently had a French version at his side while he was engaged in his onerous task.

The discoveries of these two nugget-winners, Thorpe and Blount, are represented by a small group of books, bearing date between 1598 and 1632, to which our national literature is a debtor: the Lucan and Musæus, the Shakespear's Sonnets, *Pericles*, the Montaigne, the Cervantes, the Folio Shakespear, and the Lyly—the last for the songs—ran a considerable risk of perishing, had they not stepped forward; and so let them not want their due! On the whole, considering the signal importance of the volume, the fourth share of Blount in the First Folio must be allowed to be his most distinguished title to our gratitude, although the cost and risk to him individually were not great. The occurrence of his name as a partner in the venture is intelligible and natural enough; he had had a fairly good trial of the marketability of Shakespeareana, and after many years of publishing activity was probably in a position to put capital into a likely undertaking. It deserves a passing note, that his zeal or enterprize sometimes led him to make an entry of some book in contemplation beforehand, as when he registered a translation in this same year (1623) by Jonson of the *Argenis* of Barclay, of which we hear and know no more. But his entertainment of the project confirms the strange interest at the time in an insipid work of fiction. Possibly Jonson or he, or both, thought better of it; they may have learned that there was a rival version in hand.

I apprehend that one of Blount's latest speculations was the collected edition of the plays of Lyly in 1632, encouraged perhaps by the surviving popularity of the *Euphues*, and this, again, entered into the category of a find, since Blount succeeded in meeting with the songs omitted in

the quartos. In his preface he emphasizes the dramas as "the greatest treasure our poet left behind him, six ingots of refined invention richer than gold." Euphuistic Blount!

I may be thought to have expatiated fully at large on the doings of Thorpe and Blount; but I have so acted, because I felt that in connection with an important aspect of the literary career of Shakespear the former deserves to occupy a more prominent rank and to have higher credit awarded to him than have so far been the case, while it seemed necessary to do what was possible to illustrate the association of Blount with Marlowe's posthumous papers, *Titus Andronicus* inclusive, and his interest in *Pericles*. Blount disappears after 1632 from public view; the date of his death is unknown to me. His career as a promoter of literary ventures had spread over a longer period than that of Thorpe, and he was also in a position to commit himself at need to such larger and costlier undertakings as the Montaigne, the Cervantes, and the Folio Shakespear of 1623, a monumental tripos, had he achieved nothing more.

Edward Alleyn registers the purchase in 1609 under household stuff as "a book, Shaksper Sonettes, 5d"—and a second copy apparently bought at the time, which long lay at Althorp, bears a note on the title of the same original cost doubtless under similar circumstances with the contemporary memorandum on the last page: "Commendacions to my very kind and approued frind, B.M."—seeming to bespeak the acquisition by some one, who subsequently gave it to an acquaintance. With this inestimable salvage the Malone copy of *Venus and Adonis*, 1593, may, as already explained, possibly make up a triad; and they are happily, one and all, in English custody.

There are no critical appreciations either of the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, or of the *Sonnets*, at or near the time of their original appearance. Their present rarity bespeaks in some measure their temporary popularity, but

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in a larger one the result of prolonged neglect almost amounting to oblivion. The sole positive evidence of any contemporary of note having manifested sufficient interest in the work to induce him to bestow a few pence on the purchase is the entry in the Diary of Alleyn. The copy is not now at Dulwich College. It may be one of those in the Bodleian, or Alleyn may not have retained it after perusal. Yet, although he was not a man of culture, he acquired a notable collection of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, which remained intact at Dulwich, I believe, till it was mercilessly and dishonestly pillaged by Garrick and Malone.¹ But a second extant copy, as I have just shown, was purchased at the original price, if not at the same time.

¹ It is not surprising that these two gentlemen succeeded in obtaining books of which no other copies have ever been beheld. Fortunately they left their respective conveyances to the British Museum and Bodleian.

CHAPTER XI

The Sonnets continued—Absolute authenticity of the entire text canvassed—Long interval, over which the Sonnets extended (7 1592-1603)—A line in Sonnet 94 common to the play of *Edward III.*, 1596—Support for the view that there is no inner or occult sense in the series—Temptation to look into the Sonnets for biographical helps—Absence of real editorship in them—Influence of Barnfield in some, and of other sonneteers.

THE Sonnets, as published by Thorpe, are usually accepted as exclusively from the pen of Shakespear, and the similarity of style doubtless supports such a view. But Thorpe does not tell us, where Mr. W. H. met with the manuscript copies, which down to 1598, according to Meres, were in several hands; nor are we informed, whether the original autographs were employed, or whether the "loose papers," to which Meres alludes, were transcribed for the press. The superficial assertion, that the book contains only Shakespear's work, goes for nothing; Jaggard had said or implied the same thing about the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599. The circumstances, it is true, are sensibly different; the earlier collection embraces matter palpably not Shakespearian; but there is quite sufficient probability, if some of the Sonnets should raise a suspicion of a different parentage, to second the doubt in the imminent chance that among the Thorpe find there is a quatorzain or so inadvertently attributed to the writer of the rest. Thus we find No. 107 embodying references, which can scarcely belong to a period anterior to the death of Elizabeth and the succession of the House of Stuart, or, in other words, here is a sonnet, which could not have formed part of the series, one

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of the loose papers, particularised by Meres as in circulation in 1598.

“ Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Suppos'd as forfeit to a confin'd doom.
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,
And peace proclaims an olive of endless age.
Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.”

Within these poor and rough lines, of which the concluding couplet reminds us of the verses beneath the portrait of James I. in 1616, we are told, that there are means of tracing the death of Elizabeth and the advent of James I., which may be so; but some of the biographers equally see the release of Lord Southampton in 1603, which shews their faculty of penetrating below the surface much farther than I can. The allusion to the change of dynasty, however, has this virtue, that it seems to indicate the accession of new matter posterior to the Meres notice, and why should this sonnet be the sole afterbirth? The clue to their repository is vague enough in 1598; it is to be collected that such of them as were in existence—the bulk—were scattered—that the writer did not hold them; and this process of gradual augmentation, as occasion offered, may have proceeded nearly down to the date of their transfer to type. Mr. W. II. gathered the stragglers together either for Thorpe, or did so *proprio motu*, and handed them over to that individual on his application direct or indirect—through Blount or the Walsinghams. Whichever course was followed, I have shown that the person responsible for the text overlooked at all events two sonnets long since printed; and he may by

possibility have been misled as to the authorship of some, which he inserts.

The seeming lack of interest on the part of Shakespear, when the *Sonnets* were before the world, and even ostensible denial of a voice in the business, only represented what had occurred again and again, when his plays were openly pirated by adventurous stationers; yet the peculiar nature of the *Sonnets*, their survival in a manuscript shape among a private circle, and the probable ignorance of the world at large of their existence, contribute to place them in a somewhat different position from that of actual and popular dramas. Thorpe does not appear to have had at any time business relations with the poet; but there is just this distant possibility that Shakespear was an accessory before the fact, inasmuch that he acquiesced in the step, and even had a hand in the title-page, which is characteristically and suspiciously laconic. Supposing, however, such to have been the case, the internal history of the book remains unaffected. The author and the publisher of course knew who Mr. W. H. was. If Shakespear was unwilling to make the *Sonnets* public property in the usual manner, and offered no opposition to their appearance with the strange credentials appended to them by a third party, thus absolving him from censure: his omission to castigate the text and determine the sequence merely followed what had been his almost habitual practice.

There is more than a possibility, deduced from modern usage, that the volume, though dated 1609, was ready at the close of the previous year, and the personal movements of the poet during the later months of 1608 are not actually traceable. He was most probably at Stratford in September on account of the death of his mother on the 8th; he was certainly there in part of October. The *Sonnets* could not have occupied a long time at press; but if Thorpe felt it needful or proper to obtain permission to print them, he either did so prior to the departure of the author for Stratford or after his return. The book bears on its face no auxiliary indication.

One reason for the readiness of Shakespear to fall, if he did so, into the scheme of Thorpe, and even to collude with him, may have been the fear of what would be thought of such a volume at home in Stratford, if it was reported to have appeared with his sanction in the same way as the other poems. We have to bear in mind, when we look toward Stratford, that down to 1597 very little of his acknowledged work had passed the press. The bulk was retained by the theatres, and every effort used to hinder its appearance in type.

Even the average reader of the Plays skips the Sonnets as dull and unintelligible with some tincture of licentiousness. The attentive and intelligent one contracts an impression, that they present numerous inconsistencies and contradictions. The laborious and scientific student does not more nearly approach a solution acceptable at sight.

The Sonnets, in other words, were formerly regarded as mere exercises of poetical fancy and caprice. At present they are held to be luminous in a sort of chiaroscuro way with biographical and historical episodes, and to have, as it were, a *dramatis personæ* of their own. Some of us have crossed over from one extreme to the other. A not unfair or untrue estimate of these compositions may be, that they most unfavourably compare with the dramas of a writer, whose genius was, above all, dramatic, much in the same way that Mr. Swinburne's and the late Laureate's plays compare unfavourably with their lyrics, where they were, on the whole, so supreme, and which are anyhow their speciality. It is unfortunate, when a waterman undertakes to drive a mail coach.

Robin Goodfellow, in his most tricky mood, never used his victims worse than Shakespear and Thorpe between them have used us in this matter. We wade through the more than a century and a half of stanzas, encountering stumbling-blocks at short distances, and at length arrive—not at the conclusion, for there is none, but at a place, where there is no more to be read. The work is *ατελές*, a literary *torso*,

loose papers verily! Small, very small loss to the world and to the fame of the writer had it been, if the MS. had perished. But then the passage in Meres would have survived to lead us to imagine its contents so different, and make us miserable for ever; and, once more, these lyrics incidentally shew that the same pen, which traced them on paper, is not less responsible for the plays, which bear the same name.

The order of the collection is manifestly casual, arbitrary, and unauthoritative. The first and second stanzas deserve to be considered among the best in point of thought and style; but they constitute an abrupt commencement. As there is no warrant for the assumption that the author interposed—always premising that the whole is due to one pen, for we cannot be absolutely sure of so much as that—the arrangement must be due to W. H., Thorpe, or the typographer. Of the persons, who held the MSS., our knowledge is restricted to the bare statement of Meres in 1598, that the Sonnets were then in the hands of friends—whom or how many, we do not learn; there is the possibility, that the holder of some may have been the recipient of sonnets by other literary acquaintances, and that he placed all such trifles together without distinction; nor would any attempt at a new arrangement be of great avail, when the context of each sonnet, or at least each short succession of sonnets, is so evidently the fruit of some momentary impulse or some passing impression.

In *The Reign of Edward III.*, 1596, a line also forms the concluding one of the 94th Sonnet, from which the inference may be that the latter was composed about the same time, while the recollection of the image was fresh in the writer's mind, and, moreover, that the series was at this date in progress of occasional formation, as some idea struck Shakespear amid his ordinary work, and that the most recent inspirations were retained till some one begged them or borrowed them. At any rate, when the day came for bringing them to light, a complete text, so far as we know, was in the hands of one or more persons, Shakespear hardly inclusive.

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There is also the singular expression, "prophetic soul," in No. 107, above printed, which reappears in *Hamlet*.

The opinion, if such a word may be allowed, that there is no inner sense in the Sonnets, on which we can safely depend, receives a confirmation, if a feeble one, from the disregard of the sequence of 1609 in the collective volume of 1640, where the arrangement is entirely different, and the quatorzains present themselves in the shape of detached sentiments—indeed much in that, in which I apprehend that they were periodically composed. The edition of 1640 had equally no critical supervision, and was little more than a bookseller's venture, comprising, like the third edition of the *Pilgrim*, 1612, pieces not by Shakespear. It was the last chance of separating from the sonnets written by the poet any not from his pen, looking at the inferiority and even the incongruity of some of the series and the suspicious circumstances, under which the book was ushered into existence; and it was a chance, which it was not the cue of the bookseller to regard.

The Sonnets are certainly open to many strictures. They strike one as an inconsequent rhapsody; the sentiment is often thin and weak, the diction poor, and the metre faulty. Yet the case stands with them, as it does with the remaining poems, differently from the dramatic series. There may be in places insertions of words and even portions of lines, made necessary by the defective state of the printer's copy; yet substantially we hold in our hands to-day the *ipsissima verba* for better or for worse.

If the Sonnets were arranged by an editor, it must have surely been one, who was ignorant of any covert allusion or any necessity for consecutiveness; but the presumption is, that the printer received from Thorpe the MSS. much as they came to hand from various sources, and committed the 154 quatorzains to type, as we at present see them. The whole, or nearly the whole, wears the aspect of having been the product of those years, when the writer was engaged in London in revising other men's labours, and possibly in taking parts in

the performances. Had he written them in or near the year of issue, I apprehend that they would have been very different; and, again, had a sensible proportion been the fruit of maturer thought, the contrast would have been unmistakably powerful. As the matter stands, the entire work is of the same second-rate leaven—a companion to the sonnets of Constable, Watson, and Barnfield; and the encomium of Meres in 1598, if it is not accurate criticism or criticism at all, is just the sort of praise, which he extends to the three writers above named, and which is the best deserved, I take it, by Constable of all the four, although we must not forget that Watson was almost the pioneer in this class of composition and in the imitation of the Italian school.

In some, if not too many of the Sonnets forsooth we see the poetical expression of the author in its earliest and rawest form. The inequality of merit and power are to be securely attributed, not to any process of revision, but to the term of years, over which the accumulation of matter seems to have spread, that is to say, from 1594, when Shakespear was thirty, to 1603, when he was forty, and to the consequent growth of taste and experience. Yet few will be probably found to contend that, had the poet written nothing else, we should be thinking of him to-day, as we do; his strength was clearly not in the sonnet, nor indeed in lyrical work of any kind. He was essentially the Dramatist. In the Play his genius found full scope, and in the Play alone; with many brilliant exceptions, even the interspersed songs are comparatively inferior.

Taking the main bulk of the collection of 1609, it may be regarded as chronologically concurrent with the first and second epochs of dramatic work, when Shakespear passed through the experimental stage of editorial recension to that of original authorship, but when the power to create *Hamlet*, *Leur*, *Othello*, and the *Tempest* could only just be surmised from the superiority of the second series of dramas to their predecessors. The poet never displayed a parallel advance in lyrical poetry, partly perchance from want of leisure and

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the more lucrative returns from the theatres, yet also partly from the consciousness of a less marked bent in the other direction.

Whatever judgment may be passed on these effusions as poetical efforts, they are not inferior in that respect to *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and they are infinitely more interesting and important as biographical documents and guides, in spite of all that has been expressed and written to the contrary; that they are unequal in merit may be set down to their intermittent production under various influences. Within these lines I irrevocably assert that the means are supplied to us of adding very sensibly to our acquaintance with a very obscure subject, and of drawing nearer to a tiresomely mysterious and reticent personality. That is their worth—their sole worth. I rejoice that we possess them. I grieve that they are so mediocre. Yet, had they been of a finer yarn, they might—probably would—have been less fruitful in co-operative suggestion. These and the other lyrics are to be broadly and mainly regarded and estimated, not only as *Juvenilia*, but as literary exercises more or less foreign to the true gift of the writer.

The antecedent comparison with Barnfield extends beyond the style and cast of thought: for it is plain that, when he composed his Sonnets, Shakespear, who in the *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* had adopted a different class of story as his groundwork, was also influenced by the Virgilian model so transparent in the *Affectionate Shepherd*, and traceable back to Greek and even Oriental sentiment, where the relationship was less fanciful and more gross. Let us recollect, however, that he was the senior of Barnfield by a decade, and that we are entitled to look for something better from a man of thirty, Shakespear's age in 1594, than from one of twenty, Barnfield's age in the same year.

The extreme youth of Barnfield excuses the blemishes of style, costume, and matter. The classical writers served as general patterns in those days, and in addition to them the Italian school had begun to exercise an influence of a rather

despotic nature on the English sentimental writers. Barnfield, when he took an old man's part in his first poem, acted in deference to the early Italian conceit countenanced by Petrarch no less than by Virgil; and he to some extent followed up the same artificial and pointless device in the sonnets appended to his *Cynthia*, 1595. The models furnished by Watson and other earlier masters in this school of writing were also of service to Shakespear.

The irresponsible power of the sonneteer is felt by no one so strongly as the sonneteer himself, who has been accustomed at all times to use his discretion with freedom and impunity. Taking the 154 items which compose the Shakespear series, the theories, hypotheses, and guesses advanced in regard to the meaning or aim of much that is found there establish the acknowledged existence of ambiguity; and this feature has been deepened and aggravated by our ignorance of the daily and intimate life of the poet during all the years of his separate residence in London. It is no satisfaction or assistance to be informed that there is perhaps no person of the period, occupying a similar position, of whom we know so much; for there is none as to whom a distant age has been taught to acquire so keen a curiosity.

CHAPTER XII

Biographical lesson of the Sonnets—Herbert and Southampton—The Essex plot—Performance of a scene from a play in various parts of London—Bartholomew Griffin and his *Fidessa*—Observations on the question of complexion—One of the day—Analogy in *Othello*—Shakespear and Jonson's *Masques of Blackness and Beauty*—The Prince of Morocco in the *Merchant of Venice*—Virtue of contraries—A youthful reminiscence of Stratford in Sonnet 143—Despondent vein in some of the series—Hints at death and even suicide—Parallel passages from *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure* illustrative of others in the Sonnets and in Montaigne on the subject of Death—Autobiographical worth of the Sonnets—Two of the group widely separated placed side by side (Nos. 2 and 73)—The writer prematurely old at forty—Shakespear's abstinence from complimentary addresses—Critical summary—Dr. Giles Fletcher, Shakespear's contemporary, on the nature of this class of writing—Drayton's *Idea*—Tennyson's *Maud*.

IN lieu of a succession of amatory and fanciful exercises, written at intervals under the sway of various humours, and so embodying, in common with the whole race of such products, the loose recollections of bygone years, a certain type of modern scholarship discloses to us not merely unsuspected material for the biography of the writer but for the secret annals of the court of Elizabeth. We are assisted in distinguishing passages in the lives of Lord Herbert and Lord Southampton, the rivalry between the poet and the former nobleman in the affections of Mary Fitton, a maid of honour to the queen, the discontent of Shakespear with his lot as a player, and his gratification at the return of Southampton to liberty and favour on the accession of James I. There remains, over and above, the conventional courtship by the sonneteer of the fair youth with the golden locks, who is identified with Herbert, and the apparent union of the dark lady with him, succeeded by a renewal of the

original complaint, as if the order, in which we have received the matter, was false.

Herbert and Southampton figure at the actual Court of the queen as two dissolute and turbulent young men, of whom one seduces Mary Fitton, and refuses to marry her, and the other seduces Elizabeth Vernon, daughter of John Vernon of Hodnet in Shropshire, and makes her at the last moment¹ that imperfect reparation in August, 1598, on his return to London from serving under Essex in Spain and Ireland. They both fell under the displeasure of their royal mistress: the former on this account, the latter for this and graver reasons. The patron of Shakespear was disgraced in 1598 through the commission of a serious misdemeanour, and in 1601 was implicated in the Essex plot, for which Essex and himself were capitally condemned on Thursday, February 19, 1601.² Cecil, who is found at this very juncture referring to him as "the poor young Earl," saved him from the scaffold; but he was imprisoned during the remainder of Elizabeth's reign. The 107th Sonnet is pronounced by some to commemorate his release. When James I. came to the throne, authors were not afraid to deliver eulogies on Essex, and to inscribe them to Southampton and others about the Court.

The wild political scheme, which cost the Earl of Essex his life, and which we appear to see foreshadowed in the Earl's preface under the initials *A. B.* to Sir Henry Savile's *Tacitus*, 1598, where he metaphorically speaks of the troubles at Rome through "a good Prince governed by evil ministers," "the misery of a torn and distracted State," and so on, which responds to the occurrences in London two or three years later, is associated with a bespoken performance in the public streets

¹ When she was on the eve of becoming a mother. He behaved worse than the poet, who entered into a prenuptial bond six months prior to the birth of Susanna Shakespear, nor did the nobleman perhaps share the poet's lifelong conscientious qualms.

² Letter from John Bradshawe to Sir Lionel Tollemache, February 24, 1600-1.

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prior to the day fixed for the execution of the *coup d'état*, of a theatrical spectacle representing the deposition of Richard II., an episode, of which the application was apt to be brought home to Elizabeth by the papal bull of 1596, deposing her as a heretic, and by the actual discovery of a Spanish project for the invasion of England through one Richard Grafton, a citizen of London,¹ who had resided in Spain, and had suffered losses there and during the Spanish naval operations on the Irish coasts in 1588. The actors were kept in ignorance of the drift of the show, which was represented as "an old play," and not likely to draw many people; and Augustine Phillips, one of the cast, accordingly received forty shillings in aid. There is no hint of the direct interposition of Shakespear; the person who engaged the company is officially said to have been Sir Giles Merrick, who looked on the matter as a happy auxiliary stroke; yet there is a powerful probability, that a rumour of the intention came to the ears of the poet, and that he had advisedly kept out of the way. His father, who died at Stratford in the same autumn, may have been previously ill, and have called for his presence. Phillips was examined before the Council; but neither he nor the company suffered any penal consequences.

Essex alone fell.² The circumstances connected with the dramatic feature in the conspiracy were most extraordinary. The queen herself, in a conversation with William Lambarde the historian, August 4, 1601, when he waited on her to submit to her his *Pandecta Rotulorum*, and she accidentally or otherwise opened the book at the reign of Richard II., said: "I am Richard the Second, know yee not that?" He replied: "Such a wicked imagination was determined and attempted by a most unkind gentleman—the most adorned creature that ever your Maiestie made." The queen

¹ He was perhaps related to William Grafton, captain of *Our Lady*.

² In the list of those implicated we see names subsequently connected with the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. *Hayfield MSS.*, 1906, pp. 86-7.

farther remarked: "He that will forget God, will also forget his benefactors; this tragedie was played fourtie times in open streets and houses;" and Elizabeth incidentally mentioned that a portrait of Richard II. had been presented to her by Lord Lumley—just then an equivocal gift. Southampton¹ was scarcely less guilty than Essex; but his youth pleaded for him, and in the early part of 1605 *Love's Labor's Lost*, which had been presented at Court in January of the year, when the queen was not present, was performed before Anne of Denmark in a very effective manner, as a graceful thank-offering, at Southampton House, there being no other play in readiness, and Richard Burbage recommending this piece, which (he said) would for wit and mirth please her Majesty exceedingly. The author not improbably took a part.

The exact nature of the play, or rather scene from a play, introduced into the late tragical episode, has been variously stated. There seems to have been a piece on the reign of Henry IV., in which the deposition of his predecessor was introduced, anterior to that of Shakespear as we possess it; and the printed copies of the latter do not comprise this incident previously to the second issue of 1608, where the title-page announces for the first time "new additions of the Parliament Scene and the deposing of King Richard." This novel feature, at least in type, was possibly a recension by the poet of the obnoxious political manifesto of 1601, which then existed in MS. as part of another work, and in 1608 was deemed presentable without danger or offence. But the attitude of Bacon toward his early patron and benefactor Essex was not soon forgotten, and in fact survived him, for a separate edition of the *Apology* was printed as late as 1642.

¹ It is not easy to decide whether it is to this nobleman or to his successor in the title, that we should ascribe the anecdote about the meeting in the Oxford bookshop, when the Earl went to inquire for the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and was introduced to Burton, who happened to be there.

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If we decline to accept the view, that the batch of Sonnets embraces within it covert allusions and clues merely awaiting pursuit, and constitutes an unique biographical thesaurus, and treat them as occupying the same station as their numerous analogues in our own and other languages and literatures, alike ancient and modern, the really tangible points are very few and relatively immaterial. Supposing that we admit the revelations as genuine and sincere, it is a logical *sequitur*, that all the extant collections of the same class are to be similarly interpreted, and many and many a literary life rewritten, saving only those instances, where the author has left a disclaimer.

Sonnet 23 has the peculiarity that it seems to have been composed just when circumstances led to a suspension of theatrical performances in London in 1593 and the appearance of Shakespear as a lyrical writer. He appears to glance at his own not too successful efforts as a performer of parts, and to point to his books, that is, his two poems, as pleaders for him—not surely from their subject-matter, perchance from their literary pretensions.

In Sonnet 27 there are these lines:—

“Weary with toil I hasten to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tir’d;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body’s work’s expir’d:
For then my thoughts (*far from where I abide*)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee—”

What are we to infer hence, if it is not that the author had paid a visit to a friend at a distance, and on his return brooded over the severance? But in No. 41 comes a disclosure that, besides the male friend, who resides far enough away to render the journey to and fro fatiguing, there is a third party to be considered, that party a woman; for the sonneteer says:—

"Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,¹
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd ;
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son
 Will sourly leave her, till she have prevailed ?
 Ah me ! but yet thou mightst thy suit forbear,
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
 Who lead thee in their riot even there
 Where thou art forc'd to break a twofold truth ;
 Hers by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
 Thine by thy beauty being false to me."

A rival is superseding the writer in the affection of the woman, and in the next stanza (a rare example of sequential propriety) has married her. For Shakespear immediately proceeds :—

"That thou hast her, it is not all my grief,
 And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly ;
 That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief,
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly—"

These poor lines can import only that the man, by marriage, has inflicted a double wrong, in depriving his friend of his society as a bachelor, and of the woman of whom that friend was enamoured. But the quatorzain concludes with this felicitous consolation :—

"But here's my joy ;² my friend and I are one ;
 Sweet flattery ! Then she loves me alone,"

¹ See *infra* in the Note on *Titus Andronicus*. That drama and the *First Part of Henry VI.*, as altered by Shakespear, were before him, perhaps, about the same point of time. The two passages may be given side by side :—

<p><i>Henry VI.</i>, Pt. I. v. 3. "Suf. She's beautiful, and there- fore to be woo'd ; She is a woman ; therefore to be won—"</p>	<p><i>Titus Andronicus</i>. "She is a woman, therefore may be wooed ; She is a woman ; therefore may be won—"</p>
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When *Titus Andronicus* was printed in 1594, the two other dramas still remained in MS.

² A somewhat similar form occurs in Constable's *Diana*, 1592 (Sonnet 28 of Hazlitt's ed. 1859) :—

"But joy in this (though Fate 'gainst me repine)
 My verse still lives to witness thee divine."

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—a position which the new husband, unless he was unusually generous or unusually phlegmatic, was scarcely likely to acknowledge or relish. When we reach No. 50, however, an expedition on horseback to the residence of the couple has been undertaken; and a succession of stanzas is occupied by a whimsical rhapsody, of which the exact purport or drift is problematical, as the allusions are directed to an individual, that individual almost beyond question a man; the lady disappears for a season. We come across her once more, however, in Stanza 80, where an altogether novel piece of news meets the eye, for here the rival is described as a poetical contemporary, who has better succeeded in panegyricizing the lady. So many bards celebrated so many obdurate or inconstant damsels at this time, that identification might prove impossible, nor could we suffer ourselves to be guided by the sonneteer's acknowledgment of the superior genius of his opponent. At any rate he was a verse-writer. For how can we otherwise translate into plain prose the following lines?—

“O, how I faint, when I of you do write,
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame
But since your worth (wide as the ocean is)
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
On your broad main doth wilfully appear—”

In 1596 Bartholomew Griffin published *Fidessa, more Chaste than Kind*, in which he borrowed passages from *Venus and Adonis* and elsewhere. But his sonnets, like those of Shakespear, may have been in existence before they were printed, and the more famous writer, who may here pose as the humbler one *poeticâ licentiâ*, may have been unaware that Griffin was his debtor. It really appears to me unworthy of serious notice that more than one critic has identified the person shadowed in the above-quoted lines

with Christopher Marlowe, who died in 1593, and from whose pen we have nothing answering to the description.

I submit for consideration these points in default of any better solution: (1) Griffin was not only a Warwickshire man, but appears to have belonged to a place so near to Stratford as Coventry; (2) He knew the ancient family of Essex at Lambourn, in Berkshire, 46 miles from London; (3) He had doubtless heard of his countryman's fame as a poet, for there is evidence that he had more than had *Venus and Adonis* under his eyes; (4) Shakespear's 80th Sonnet suggests his acquaintance with the literary gifts of a contemporary, who had been more successful than him in ingratiating himself with a common lady friend at a distance from London, yet at one accessible on horseback, even if not without fatigue. I merely ask: Did Fidessa dwell at Lambourn, and had Shakespear met her there or elsewhere? If she relented, and married Griffin, his nuptial state was of brief duration, for his wife (whoever she was—her name was Katherine) became a widow in 1602.

No. 107, which is elsewhere quoted at length, has not exhausted the strangely elaborate picture of devotion, discontent, almost despair, and indeed Nos. 97 and 98 permit us to judge, so far as we may judge at all from such witnesses, that the poet has not revisited his married friend, nor the latter him, and that the two continue to live at a distance sufficient to make a meeting difficult. But No. 107, just cited, goes farther, as it embodies a tolerably straightforward and distinct reference to the change of dynasty in 1603 and to "an olive of endless age" in James I. and his house.

The 127th and 144th of the series present the aspect of being readable side by side:—

"In the old age black was not counted fair,	"Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name!	Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
But now is black beauty's suc- cessive heir,	The better angel is a man right fair,

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And beauty slander'd with a bastard shame :	The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
For since each hand hath put on nature's power,	To win me soon to hell my female evil
Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face,	Tempteth my better angel from my side,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy hour,	And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
But is profan'd, if not lives in disgrace.	Wounding his purity with her foul pride.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,	And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,
Her eyes so suited ; and they mourners seem	Suspect I may, yet not directly tell :
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,	But being both from me, both to each friend,
Slandering creation with a false esteem :	I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet so they mourn, becom- ing of their woe,	Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
That every tongue says, beauty should look so."	Till my bad angel fire my good one out."

So far as any sense is capable of being extracted from such wild and vague utterances, which bespeak early composition and an undisciplined and immature taste, the marriage of the lady has proved in the writer's opinion inauspicious alike for her husband and for him. She is a person of dark complexion and of such a type of beauty as was not formerly admired, and there is the danger, lest she should by her conduct or disposition shorten her partner's days.

So early as 1599-1600 a play had been accepted by Philip Henslowe, entitled *The Spanish Moor's Tragedy*; it was the composite work of three contemporary dramatists, Decker, Haughton, and Day; but nothing is positively ascertained about its history beyond the hypothesis that it was identical with a piece published in 1657 under the title of *Lust's Dominion*, or, *The Lascivious Queen*, when it was attributed to Marlowe. There was a prevalent feeling

about the time, when the two above-printed sonnets were written, that a certain attraction resided in a swarthy hue and dark eyes, nor was it out of favour in 1604, when Jonson presented at Court his *Masque of Blackness*, where Niger is made to say:—

“To do a kind and careful father’s part,
In satisfying every pensive heart
Of these my daughters, my most lovéd birth :
Who, though they were the first-form’d dames of earth,¹
And in whose sparkling and refulgent eyes
The glorious sun did still delight to rise ;
Though he, the best judge and most formal cause
Of all dames’ beauties, in their firm hues draws
Signs of his fervent’st love ; and thereby shows
That in their black the perfect’st beauty grows—”

And when in the same year Shakespear produced *Othello*, with whom he makes Desdemona fall in love, the sonneteer appears to say that a prejudice against blackness arose, but was eventually overcome. But the quotation has no farther value than the clue which it furnishes to the claim of dark beauties at this period to a share of admiration ; and one at least took captive the heart of the man-friend—a person of the same rank as the writer—in the passages which I have transcribed. In the 41st of the Shakespear series, above quoted, there is a passage which, if it is intended to point to the dark lady, may import a question of colour, and the fairer complexion of the poet may have fascinated by contrast.

Blackness, however, before the conclusion of the masque, cedes the first place to Beauty ; and in 1607–8 Jonson prepared as a sequel his *Masque of Beauty*. It is immaterial to the argument that *Othello* was probably not more than swarthy, nor the heroine, if she was a Venetian, a blonde, unless she was a person of foreign origin, a Georgian or Circassian, and therefore not a person whom a man of *Othello*’s rank would seek in marriage. The antithesis is

¹ ? rather “form’d of dame earth.”

the poet's, and upon it—the sympathy of contrast—the drama greatly leans; and he has made it stronger even than he had likely warrant in describing the skin of the lady as “whiter than snow and smooth as monumental alabaster.”¹ *Moor* is simply = Italian *Moro*, the name of a noble Venetian family, which attained ducal rank in the fifteenth century in the person of a distinguished soldier.

I confess that I cannot coincide in the view, that *Antony and Cleopatra* falls within the present category, or the period of its origin would of course have suited well—the end of 1607. That drama is rather Asiatic or Oriental in its complexion and costume than a vehicle for contrasts of colour, like Jonson's masques and Shakespear's *Othello*. It was a sort of sequel and, as it were, corollary to *Julius Cæsar*, and both were based on Plutarch. Nor is there any valid reason to suppose a revival in *Antony and Cleopatra* of the phantom dark lady of the *Sonnets*, whom I do not trace outside those compositions, probably completed, as we hold them, before 1604. At the same time, it is excessively likely that Shakespear had before him, while he was at work on his masterly drama, the doctrine and force of contraries, and such a feature was at hand for his discreet use in the *Spanish Moor's Tragedy*, if that and *Lust's Dominion* be identical, years before Jonson wrote his masques, yet when nearly all the *Sonnets* had been already laid aside or distributed in MS. The voluptuous and passionate temperament of the *Lascivious Queen* may have possessed its suggestive value side by side with the Plutarch narrative and Daniel's academic and tedious performance.

¹ Comp. Halliwell-Phillips, *Outlines*, 1886, ii. 257. Webster may have derived the title of his *White Devil*, 1612, from the tract entitled, “The Wandering Jew telling Fortunes to Englishmen,” 1609; or from one of Thomas Adams's Sermons: possibly he pictured Vittoria Corombona with an alabaster skin. But *white devil* was a current phrase. In a French translation of Drake's *Voyages*, 1641, we are informed that the tigers of the Congo would not attack a white man, but fell on the blacks, and if they found a white man and a black one sleeping side by side, they would take the latter and leave the former. These tigers were leopards.

In *Much Ado About Nothing* Claudio makes a merit of being prepared to accept Hero, "were she an Ethiopie," which might either bespeak him a fair man, or the play anterior to the sonnet or sonnets where dark complexions are more favourably viewed.

There is the additional consideration to be regarded, that, if Shakespear enjoyed the opportunity of seeing the *Masque of Blackness* in MS. (for it was not published till 1608), the idea of the two sonnets, which are placed together for comparison or collation, was more than possibly suggested by that work, of which the fame, as a successful and splendid court pageant, could hardly escape general notice; and I mention for what it may be worth the circumstance that, when the production in question and the *Masque of Beauty* came out in one volume, they purported to be printed for no other than Thomas Thorpe. Should it have been the case that the allusions to Blackness fell under the eye of Shakespear, before he wrote the sonnets numbered 127 and 144, there is, on the one hand, a new, if a very slight, illustrative point, and, on the other, a farther extension of the period, over which the collection spread itself, before it saw the light.

Shakespear was certainly not scrupulous in his use of poetical licence. In the *Merchant of Venice* he had already made the Prince of Morocco a character and one of the suitors of Portia; he attributes to him fabulous exploits in the field of battle; and, which is more to my purpose, he makes him an apologist for his complexion—"the shadowed livery of the burnished sun." But, in pleading for the equal quality of the blood beneath the sable skin, the poet went farther than the praise or defence of dark women of his own nationality, and rather evinced that generosity of sentiment, which expressed itself through Hamlet, Shylock, and other characters, in reproof of certain narrow insular prejudices. At the same time the virtue of contrast was ever present to the artist, and he could not resist the temptation of drawing into service the Ethiopian's teeth and the bright

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jewel hanging at the Æthiop's ear. In the *Winter's Tale*, Act ii. scene 1, there is a return, however, to the question of dark beauty in the passage: "yet black brows, they say, become some women best—" The topic certainly laid strong hold of the writer, and manifests him as a close observer of the sex—which we need not question. The designation *Æthiopian* seems to have been so intimately associated with a dark complexion, that Lisle entitled his version of Heliodorus in 1631, by way of distinction and novelty, the *Fair Æthiopian*, and Harl. MS. 7313 contains an inedited drama of the seventeenth century called the *White Æthiopian*, founded on the same story.

The member of the group just preceding the 144th is partly occupied by a domestic reminiscence of Stratford in the youth of the writer—perhaps in his earliest married life:¹—

"Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
One of her feather'd creatures broke away,
Sets down her babe, and makes all swift despatch
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay;
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase" . . .

and the thought descends to this anti-climax:—

"So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,
Whilst I thy babe chase thee afar behind;
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,
And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind:
So will I pray that thou mayst have thy Will,
If thou turn back, and my loud crying still."

The next quotation is from No. 152:—

"In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing—"

¹ In an earlier place I have cited other illustrations of that side of the subject.

The closing couplet of No. 151 is:—

“No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her love, for whose dear love I rise and fall.”

The two passages are in immediate juxtaposition; the second in order assuredly refers to a woman, and the first may do so, more probably to the wife, as the allusion would not suit an unmarried woman, while the previous stanzas wear the aspect of applying to the man friend, whom in No. 104 he seems to intimate that he had known three years.

The whole is a tiresome and tantalizing rigmarole, much of the verse as poetry and even as rhythm of the poorest quality, and the arrangement defective, yet incapable of rectification by any editor, owing to the piecemeal fashion in which the contents of the printed volume accumulated during many long years. Yet the whole context, while it here and there hardly bespeaks a Shakespearean parentage, has the air of belonging to the same train of associations.

The self-depreciatory and hypochondriacal temperament, which colours the Sonnets, and points in one or two places to death or even suicide as a climax to a blighted and disconsolate life, was surely not an absolute invention.¹ Was it not prompted and justified by unhappy domestic conditions and an enforced severance from all, who should have been nearest and dearest? In Montaigne Shakespear might have met with matter for both sides of the argument, as they are delivered by Hamlet himself and in *Measure for Measure* by Claudio. These opinions belong to the period comprised between the production of those two pieces—to 1602-4 or thereabout. The French writer regarded the closing scene more philosophically than his English follower; and a careful perusal of the passages in the plays satisfies me that our poet was haunted during many years by speculations on the question of self-murder and its spiritual bearing. It may be of service to place his remarks in juxtaposition, and

¹ When Napoléon was at Valence in 1786, he seems, under an analogous influence, to have canvassed the same question.

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invite a comparison between them and his utterances in the Sonnets:—

Hamlet (1602), Act iii. Sc. 1.

“*Ham.* To be, or not to be,
that is the question;
Whether 't is nobler in the mind
to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? to die,—to sleep
No more . . .
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause; there's the respect,
That makes calamity of so long life:
For who would bear the whips
and scorns of time,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin . . . ?
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will;
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make
cowards of us all—”

Measure for Measure (1604),
Act iii. Sc. 1.

“*Claud.* Ay! but to die, and
go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice:
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world, or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and uncertain thoughts
Imagine howling—'t is too horrible.
The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.”

Again and again Shakespear reverts to the topic and the pain; and we may make what allowance we please for his acute intellectual sensibility, and for poetical or dramatic

licence, without shaking the conviction that in these several indirect records there is an undercurrent of autobiography, just as there is in the analogous confessions of faith on the part of Montaigne. At the same time, in a later production, *Antony and Cleopatra*, death is treated more lightly and indifferently. I am not sure whether we are to ascribe that to the circumstances, to the Oriental temperament of the heroine. Regarding the Sonnets as a group of stanzas printed without critical decorum and without final recension by the writer, perhaps even left in a state not admitting clear and consecutive arrangement, there seems to be warrant for turning the material there discoverable and select passages in the Plays to a biographical account for the purpose of shedding light on that portion of the life of Shakespear, which intervened between his departure from Stratford about 1587 and his comparative emergence from obscurity in his private relations in 1608.

Two of the number (ii. and lxxiii.), which lie far apart in the sole text, deal with a cognate subject, and were probably, with some immediately following in order, among the latest compositions in the series; they contrast the man of middle age with his junior, whom he counsels to marry, before he becomes such another as himself, and in order to transmit his type to posterity. There are those who identify with the recipient of such advice the young Earl of Pembroke. Below are the two sonnets side by side:—

II.

LXXIII.

<p>"When forty winters have besieg'd¹ thy brow, And <i>dug</i> deep trenches in thy beauty's field,</p>	<p>"That time of year thou may'st in me behold, When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang</p>
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¹ Old copy and modern editions read *shall besiege*; but the action is progressive, not simultaneous. Napoléon, whose career was almost exactly of equal duration with that of Shakespear, exhausted his physical energy prematurely. He once said, that a man could not at forty do what he had done at thirty. It was of him and Byron that Macaulay observed that, at a time of life, when other men had scarcely completed their education, they had risen to the height of power and fame.

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Thy youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now, Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held :	Upon those boughs, which shake against the cold, Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
Then being ask'd, where all thy beauty lies,	In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,	As after sunset fadeth in the west,
To say, within thy own deep- sunken eyes,	Which by and by black night doth take away,
Were an all-eating shame and thrifless praise.	Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
How much more praise deserv'd thy beauty's ease,	In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
If thou could'st answer—' This fair child of mine,	That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
Shall sum my count, and make my <i>eld</i> ¹ excuse—'	As the deathbed, whereon it must expire,
Proving his beauty by succession thine.	Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This were to be new made, when thou art old, And see thy blood warm, when thou feel'st it cold."	This thou perceiv'st which makes thy love more strong, To love that well, which thou must leave ere long."

The canon in pastoral poetry of all ages and countries, which licenses the fictitious assumption of years without ostensible motive or benefit in one man paying an artificial courtship to another, assuredly does not apply here. Is it reasonable to seek or accept any explanation except or beyond the superficial one? Is it necessary? These exercises may be partly at least ascribed to a stage in the life of Shakespear, when he had reached his prime; some—one almost certainly—were composed as late as 1603, when he was thirty-nine, and there is no particular hazard—the order in the book being untrustworthy—nay, false—in setting down this pair of stanzas to the very year, when the forty winters had done their work, and had wrought more than average havoc on a system, worn by incessant intellectual labour.

¹ Old copy and editions *old*.

On the whole, I have arrived at the conclusion, after considering all the evidence at my command, that, while Shakespear unquestionably had in his mind, as he penned the Sonnets at intervals, persons, events, and passages in other writers of the same class of composition, the stanzas are a trophy of luxuriant and wayward fancy, and a reflex of impressions in actual life elaborated—not always with judgment and taste—too often coarsely and carelessly. The *Lover's Complaint* and portions of the *Passionate Pilgrim* might just as well in substance have made part of the series; they are equally incoherent and generic; and in the *Pilgrim* there is a stanza, which might have dropped out of *Venus and Adonis*.

The method pursued by Shakespear in the structure and costume of his Sonnets and of certain cognate productions presents no peculiarity. They simply follow the precedent set by the earliest and most celebrated authors of these privileged compositions. There is precisely the same empirical affectation of personality, the same studied minuteness of description, the same pathetic or engaging story of perjured love or passionate despair. We encounter all the emotions, of which our nature is susceptible, depicted in all their verisimilitude, vividness, and force. There is a groundwork of real circumstances connected or detached, which are to the writer somewhat, what to an artist is a sketch or a series of sketches for a painting; and for the rest he is responsible. He fabricates an artificial tissue, according to his plan and power, gradually under temporary or wavering sensations, or by one sustained effort possibly under one; and in his person the world usually has and loses the sole trustworthy exponent of the mûsaic of fact and fable. The Shakespear bequest strikes me as falling under the first category. A great deal has been said on the nature of the Elizabethan sonnet and its continental counterpart; but no one has put the matter so sensibly and so pithily as the author of one of the long series—Dr. Giles Fletcher, who says, in the preface to his *Licia* (1593): "a man may write

of love, and not be in love, as well as of husbandry, and not go to the plough, or of witches and be none, or of holiness and be profane." Shakespear's own countryman, however, and contemporary, Drayton, accentuates the true character of his book of sonnets in another and more direct way; for he expressly confers on it or on his mistress the name of *Idea*, which is neither more nor less than an admission, that the verses were of a fanciful and romantic texture. Unlike Shakespear, Drayton made haste to bring his work of this class before the public; it was printed in 1593; and as his personal friendship with his fellow-countryman is a matter of record, his volume may be thought to deserve a high place among those, which, if they did not serve as models, at least contributed to suggest an experiment in that style of composition.

Let us take the case of Tennyson's *Maud*, than which a stranger and more incoherent rhapsody was probably never composed. To affirm that the stanzas reflect the genuine sentiments of the writer may be more or less hazardous; but it is totally out of the question to believe that they tell an authentic and connected story, and as with Shakespear's Sonnets and certain of his miscellaneous lyrics in the *Pilgrim* and *Love's Martyr*, the constituent parts of *Maud* are susceptible of rearrangement or redistribution at pleasure.

I adduce this recent and familiar example to illustrate the prevailing infidelity of the entire amatory and sentimental school of verse, which had its rise among the classics, but was more immediately indebted to renascent Italy; and such a view is fortified by the transparent plagiarisms of every description one from the other, and by the ingenuous avowal of one or two of their motives and meaning. These specious compositions resemble the prose novel, which delineates character, as they portray passions both alike more or less insincere and imaginary; they were in the main poetical exertions, breathing artificial or assumed emotions; and such were the sonnets of Shakespear himself—the offspring of a labouring and teeming fancy, happily

equal to grander efforts in another field, where, as here, the level and the quality fluctuated, but where also there were abundant examples of a loftier reach and a broader scope. The Shakespearean lyrics, save a few real gems, cannot for a moment bear comparison with the plays. But even in those there is a strange and puzzling disparity, insomuch that, while there is a vast deal in Shakespear far beyond any other modern dramatist, there is a respectable body of matter in others, which rises above Shakespear, when he is not at his best.

No real key is forthcoming to the Man and Woman shadowed out in the series. I fail to appreciate the worth and weight of the Fitton theory. But there may have been some temporary amour belonging to the obscure period between 1587 and 1603, on which the stanzas or sonnets more immediately portraying this passion and grief must be taken to be a fantastic and hyperbolic superstructure. The nature of Shakespear was undoubtedly emotional, and his position a trying one during all that time. We owe to the twofold agency some of the scandal, which makes part of the Ana and of some of the biographies, including the foolish Davenant gossip.

How wholesomely and at the same time suggestively different from the alleged covert portraiture of individuals and incidents there is that apostrophe to Essex, in the unfulfilled expectation of his triumphal return from Ireland with Southampton in 1599, in *Henry V.* :—

“Were now the general of our gracious empress,
As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
How many would this peaceful city quit
To welcome him !—”

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III

THE DRAMATIC WORK



CHAPTER XIII

Shakespear and Montaigne—Strong intellectual affinity between them—Some account of John Florio, Montaigne's English translator—Delay and difficulty in obtaining a publisher for his book—Shakespear not necessarily indebted to the English version—Parallel passages of Shakespear and Montaigne—The Florio effort a singularly poor one—Its value to English literature and sentiment—Common characteristics and bearings of the two writers.

THE approach of Shakespear to the great French casuist, and the loan from him of a few ideas of an original and unusual cast, was the homage of one man of genius to another; and the obligation was incurred by the poet, when he was far more widely and favourably known in his own country than Montaigne in France or elsewhere, although the *Essays* had passed through three or four impressions in the course of a few years. There was no lack in England among French scholars of an acquaintance with the more prominent publications in that language, and the appearance of the posthumous edition of 1595 under the editorial care of Mlle. de Gournay at once awakened a new interest in the author and his work. On the 20th October, the same year, Edward Aggas, a stationer and himself a voluminous and experienced translator from the French, entered at Stationers' Hall under the hands of the Wardens "The *Essais* of Michael Lord of Mountene"; but no price was paid, apparently and indeed almost certainly, because Aggas had not the MS. in readiness, and had simply registered it to forestall competitors. He, it may be presumed, intended to carry out the undertaking himself, as he had already done a number of others; and we hear no more of the matter. Aggas did not live to accomplish his task.

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Between 1595 and 1600, when Edward Blount the publisher applied to the licensing authorities once more, there was no farther progress toward an English Montaigne, and the entry in the Register was three years old, before the long-desired book actually appeared. During these eight years such as were exceptionally interested in the class of literature had no alternative but to resort to the original; and I apprehend that among this small minority was Thomas Quiney, grandson of Adrian Quiney, a mercer of Stratford,¹ and son of that particular friend of the poet, Richard Quiney. These Quineys, who were mercers and vintners, and had relations with London, if not with the wine-growing provinces of France, notably Bordeaux itself,² where the *Essays* first saw the light, were very early householders at Stratford, and persons of exceptional culture, and Thomas, who subsequently espoused Judith Shakespear, was a most likely man to invest in one of the earlier Bordeaux editions of the *Essays* on their first appearance. These contained Books First and Second only; and to those portions the indebtedness of the poet seems to be restricted. Moreover, it is observable, that in the passages, which he has employed, that in the *Tempest* inclusive, Shakespear reproduces the substance of his original, rather than the text, as if the general idea had fixed itself in his mind, and he wrote from recollection, not with the volume before him—recollection, that is to say, of what Quiney had read and explained to him. There is a confirmation of my idea and contention as to the use by his English contemporaries of the French *editio princeps* of the *Essays* on its first appearance by the recovery of the copy, which belonged to Jonson, and presents his usual marks of ownership.

¹ Probably this may be the same person, whose name occurs as one of the parties to an indenture about 1580, cited in my *Handbook*, 1867, under A. (F.). He is there described, however, as Adrian Quiney, goldsmith. The conjoint name is very uncommon.

² It is said that, so far back as the fourteenth century, the consumption of the Bordeaux wine, as it is generically termed, was larger in England than in France.

In the presence of a copy of the Florio version once in the hands of Shakespear, and of the fact, that it was in type soon enough to serve for reference in the case, at all events, of *Measure for Measure* and the *Tempest*, it would be futile to contend, that the dramatist did not open its leaves, and refresh his impressions. But I adduce the foregoing testimony to shew, that he was not necessarily dependent on the translation.

The Frenchman, in spite of all his variety, humour, and *naïveté*, was purely an author for the closet and for scholars and thinkers. His contemporary profited by the enormous advantage, which his standing as a playwright and performer in plays conferred on him. In his time, and very nearly down to the present, the English readers of Montaigne were extremely few and uncritical; and that the poet had borrowed from him here and there was almost unknown.

It was natural enough that Shakespear should, with his proneness to the impounding of all matter of a convertible character, shew himself peculiarly alert, when his attention was directed by some accident to this singular work, in turning over the pages, perchance (as I have submitted) with Quiney, and earmarking anything which struck him.

The Englishman might well acquire a peculiar sympathy with the Gascon seigneur, mainly familiar to his own countrymen as a distinguished municipal dignitary and the trusted friend of his King, from the close affinity of their intellectual bent; for throughout the more philosophical of Shakespear's writings there is the identical drift to a novel and almost paradoxical view of men and things so conspicuous in the *Essays*. It is the cue of Hamlet to turn commonplaces bottom upward, and Montaigne does the same. But the exceptional interest evinced in the English volume seems in the presence of the strongest possible doubt, whether Shakespear, as a rule, retained any material after exhaustion, to be proved by his inser-

tion of his name inside the cover, thus linking it with that of a man of cognate genius.

The leading circumstances of the life of John Florio, his parentage, his acquaintances, and his pursuits as an author and teacher, are sufficiently familiar. He was an Italian tutor in London, as his father had been before him, and was employed in many noble families, where a proficiency in languages had become a part of the ordinary course of education, among others in those of the Earls of Pembroke and Southampton; and it is usually supposed that his wife was a sister of Samuel Daniel the poet. Whether the lady, who became Rose Florio, had been Rose Daniel, or otherwise, does not immediately concern the case beyond the circumstance, that the alliance would tend to add one more distinguished member to the literary circle at Fulham and its vicinity about the time of Shakespear. But it is clearly relevant to bear in mind that Florio was professionally associated with two noblemen, whose names and careers are so intimately bound up with our poet; and the prior movements and whereabouts of the Italian possess a certain share of significance. In 1578 he published his *First Fruits*, and in 1579 he was a parishioner of St. Clement Danes, where the Churchwardens' accounts for the year shew him, in common with John Fox the martyr-ologist, as a defaulter.¹ At a later date (1619) he had moved into Shoe Lane, a locality which had been from a very remote period a fashionable and favourite quarter, and where he was able to secure the lease of a house, which he retained till his death, and by his will directed to be sold for the benefit of his estate. From his literary ventures he derived, in all likelihood, very limited benefit; his version of Montaigne seems to have been some years in hand; and both that and his *Italian Dictionary* fell into the possession of the stationer Blount, ever on the watch for bargains.

¹ Folio MS. on parchment, 21 Eliz., formerly in the Phillips collection, and most obligingly placed at my disposal by Mr. Bernard Quaritch. A William Marlowe was then residing in the parish.

The delay in committing the English Montaigne to the press has been proposed as a very reasonable ground for conjecturing that the manuscript was seen and used by those, who enjoyed the benefit of friendly access to the translator, Shakespear among the number. But we are fortunately placed above the necessity in this case of recourse to guess-work, for there is the contemporary evidence in print of Sir William Cornwallis, that he had actually inspected portions of the version in the hands of Florio, of whose character and personal appearance he furnishes us with an edifying account;¹ and such a substantial piece of evidence has more than one kind of value and bearing, inasmuch as it not only creates the possibility or more, that Shakespear may have equally had the manuscript under his eyes, before it was published, but illustrates the habit, even of a mere amateurish writer, such as Cornwallis, taking the trouble to pay a visit to Florio in the City, and examine his work. To the English essayist the analogous production of the Frenchman would be naturally of particular interest, as very few books of that kind had been so far written in this country. I indicate, however, that, so far as Shakespear himself was concerned, he had most probably had facilities for mastering salient passages and points in the First and Second Books of the Essays in the original language.

Perhaps there is not a more favourable illustration of the general superiority of the notions derived from foreign sources and other writers, as they offer themselves to our criticism in the pages of the English playwright, than the example in the *Merchant of Venice*, where Shakespear was

¹ *Essays*, 1600, p. 92, quoted by Hunter, *New Illustr. of Sh.*, i. 143-4. See my edition of Montaigne, 1902, i., xl-xli. Florio was befriended in his pecuniary straits by Nicholas Saunders, of Ewell, the benefactor of other literary men about 1590. In the dedication to him of *Greene's Vision* (1593) the publisher terms him an especial Mécenas of Art. He may have assisted Greene in his last days. Was he related to the Mathew Saunders, Esq., whose name appears as the patron in 1606 of Southwell's *Fourfold Meditation*? See my *Preface*, 1874, p. 128.

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ostensibly indebted to Montaigne. I transcribe below in parallel columns the two places:—

MONTAIGNE.

(Book I. Sect. 22.)

"We need not go to what is reported of the people about the cataracts of the Nile, and what philosophers believe of the music of the spheres, that the bodies of those circles being solid and smooth, and coming to touch and rub upon one another, cannot fail of creating a marvellous harmony, the changes and cadences of which cause the revolution and dances of the stars."

SHAKESPEARE.

Merchant of Venice, v. i.

"Lor. See, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of
bright gold.
There's not the smallest orb which
thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel
sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed
cherubims:
Such harmony is in immortal
souls."

Anyone can judge for himself, how far the Englishman has left the Frenchman behind in depth and in delicacy of treatment. In the more familiar parallel passage from the *Tempest*,¹ there is this plainly observable, that Shakespear was no convert to Gonzalo's philosophy, which he merely enunciates on purpose to laugh at its empiricism, although the dramatist has sensibly paraphrased and retrenched the original language.

I shall now give side by side the original French, Florio's English version, and Shakespear's loose transmutation, partly by way of exhibiting the method of Florio:—

MONTAIGNE.

(Original French.)

Ils [Lyongus and Plato] n'ont peu imaginer une naïveté si pure & simple, comme nous la voyons par expérience: ny n'ont peu croire que nostre société se peust maintenir

FLORIO.

"They could not imagine a genuitie so pure

and simple, as we see it by experience, nor ever beleave our societie might be maintained with so little arte and humane combination. It is a nation, would I

SHAKESPEAR.

(Act ii. Sc. 1.)

Gon. I' the common-wealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for
no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no
name of magistrate;
Letters should not be

¹ Montaigne's Works, by Hazlitt, 1902, i. 243-4, and iv. 17.

avec si peu d'artifice, & de fondeurs humaine. C'est vne nation, diroye à Platon, en laquelle il n'y a aucune espece de trafique ; nulle cognoissance de lettres ; nulle science de nombres ; nul nom de magistrat, ny de superiorité politique, nul usage de service, de richesse, ou de pauvreté ; nuls contrats ; nuelles successions ; nuls partages ; nules occupations qu'oysines ; nul respect de parenté, que commun ; nuls vestemens ; nulle agriculture ; nul metal ; nul usage de vin ou de bled. Les paroles mesmes, qui signifient la mensonge, la trahison, la dissimulation, l'avarice, l'envie, la detraction, le pardon, inouyes. Combien trouueroit il la republique qu'il a imaginee, esloignée de cette perfection ?

Hos natura modos prima dedit.

On demeurant, ils vivent en vne contrée de pais tres-plaisante, & bien temperée : de façon qu'à ce que m'ont dit mes tesmoins, il est rare d'y voir, vn homme malade ; & m'ont assuré, n'en y auoir veu aucun tremblant, chasteux, edenté, ou courbé de vieillesse."

answer Plato, that hath no kind of traffike, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politike superioritie ; no vse of service, of riches, or of poverty ; no contracts, no successions, no diuidences, no occupation but idle ; no respect of kindred, but common ; no apparrell but naturall, no manuring of lands, no vse of wine, corne, or mettles. The very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation, covetousness, envie, detraction, and pardon, were never heard of amongst them. How dissonant would hee finde his imaginary commonwealth from this perfection ?

Hos natura modos primum dedit.

Nature at first vpraise, These manners did devise.

Furthermore, they live in a country of so exceeding pleasant and temperate situation, that as my testimonies have tolde me it is very rare to see a sicke body amongst them ; and they have further assured me, they never saw any man there, shaking with the palse, toothlesse, with eyes drooping, or crooked and stooping through age."

known ; riches, poverty, And use of service, none ; contract, succession, Bourn, bound of land, tith, vineyard, none ; No use of metal, corne, or wine, or oil ; No occupation ; all men idle, all ; And women too, but innocent and pure ; No sovereignty— . . . All things in common nature should produce Without sweat or endeavour ; treason, felony, Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine, Would I not have ; but nature should bring forth, Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance, To feed my innocent people.

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The version by Florio was long the sole ordinary medium, through which a conversance with the book was possible for anyone not an exceptionally advanced French scholar. But that it is a deplorably bad one there cannot be any doubt in the mind of all, who have mastered the original, and take the trouble to check even here and there the Italian preceptor's ludicrous misrenderings, somewhat aggravated by his puerile attempts to give English metrical equivalents for the classical and other foreign quotations. Florio cannot surely have understood the language, which he professed to interpret. His undertaking to-day is almost worthless. Different was the case, when it saw the light. It tended to promote the moral and political influence of Montaigne in England, and to enrich our literature with fresh ideas and suggestions. Its literal fidelity or otherwise could not stand in the way of that. As for Florio's personality it seems to have long survived in a certain circle, for in 1673 Giovanni Torriano, an Italian teacher, gives in one of his books, published in that year, his address, "At the sign of Resolute John Florio, Author of the Italian Dictionary, in Mitre Court, in Fleet Street, over against Fetter Lane."

Montaigne differed from his English contemporary, inasmuch as he delivered his views, where they were his own, or referred to himself, direct—without an intermediary; he was not only his own analyst, but largely his own biographer. But our poet, except in those passages of the *Sonnets*, where we imagine that we detect allusions to his own actual feelings and experiences, reached the ear and eye of the world through the sole channel, which was open to him—such of his persons of the play as could with fair propriety be charged with carrying the message. The genius of the author is answerable in the present instance most notably for the illusion, that the characters of his creation are flesh and blood; and this, so to speak, fallacy throws us at first off our guard, till we have taken time to realize the true facts. All the figures,

which move on and off the stage in these dramas, were as completely under the subjection of the poet as Ariel was under that of a not greater magician, Prospero ; and I am most emphatically for the enlistment in the service of the biographer of the not, after all, very numerous places, where Shakespear interposes his individuality in the only way, in which he was able, or chose, to do so. I set down these lines with the passages in *Hamlet* (iii. 1) and *Measure for Measure* (iii. 1) before me, side by side with the remarks, which Montaigne has left behind him on the same subject—that of Death; and a collation seems to favour the idea, that the repugnance to the inevitable end was far keener in the Englishman at thirty-eight than in the Frenchman at forty-seven or so, and that the former, under some circumstances of personal unhappiness, was dissuaded from suicide by the uncertainty of future punishments and rewards.

Several places in the First and Second Books of the *Essays* of Montaigne have been pointed out, as more than probable sources of Shakespearian inspiration. The least known one may be that in the *Apology of Raimond de Sebonde*,¹ where there is a striking illustration of the passage in *Hamlet*, iv. 3, where the prince is interrogated as to Polonius:—

“*King.* Now, Hamlet, where is Polonius?—”

In the *Essay* we read: “lice are sufficient to vacate Sylla’s dictatorship; and the life and heart of a great and triumphant emperor is the breakfast of a little worm.” This class of speculation is a common favourite with these two illustrious thinkers.

The community of sentiment, where death and suicide are discussed in *Measure for Measure*, is too remarkable to permit us to presume an accidental coincidence. The two-fold topic is handled in the *Sonnets*; and possibly the stanzas, where the writer touches this painful theme, are referable to the same epoch and frame of mind, when

¹ Book II. c. xii. Hazlitt’s ed. 1802, ii. 294.

Shakespear was alone in the metropolis, and had been bereaved of his only son, who died in 1596.

A very remarkable affinity of sentiment between these two great personages, although it lies in a matter of secondary consequence, is distinguishable in that common distaste, implied in the English writer, but expressed in the French one, for ostentatious and fulsome forefronts, from which there was a curious revolt just about the time of Shakespear, he himself being a conspicuous member of the minority. This point I touch elsewhere; but it seemed well to add it to the other similitudes, which have been adduced, more especially as it so much more partakes of the nature of an independent coincidence. Than the title-pages, which came, as I presume, direct from the hand of our poet, nothing can well be more succinct, nor were the epistles to Lord Southampton much less so. The latter were special personal exigencies, just as Montaigne thought fit to mention that he was a chevalier and a gentleman of his majesty's chamber. Even these particulars, if it had been put to him, he might have admitted to be surplusage. Yet he pleads, rather for others perhaps than for himself, that such titles of distinction, however numerous, having been acquired at considerable outlay, were not to be disregarded without offence; and then he winds up the paper by observing:—"le trouue pareillement de mauvaise grace d'en charger le front & inscription des liures, que nous faisons imprimer;" which I apprehend to be exactly what Shakespear felt.

When one places two contemporary writers, such as Montaigne and Shakespear, before one in one's mind's eye, side by side, one sees that in either case the main strength lay in the presentment of common notions and feelings in new and striking points of view. The author of the *Essays* did not set himself to tell us what he thought so much as what he felt, what instincts, motives, and passions swayed him, and this task he carried out, as he promised in his exordium, only too fully and candidly. Of course, no writer ever, before or since, spared himself so little, and so entirely

admitted to his inmost confidence the world for all time. His confessions have been accepted with some allowance for humour and hyperbole, and some for their very frankness. The English dramatist and poet was differently situated in almost every respect from a man, whom he broadly resembled in the possession of an emphatically original intellect. Shakespear has made autobiographical disclosures; but he used as his vehicle, instead of a book of prose theses more or less calculated for the closet of the scholar, the sonnet and the play; and in the latter he enjoyed the opportunity and advantage (if it was an advantage) of choosing spokesmen whose enunciations to the majority of hearers and readers conveyed no hidden sense, only too pregnant as they were with significance to the author and, maybe, a few others.

The profundity and delicacy of perception, so manifest in the Englishman, are far less conspicuous in the Essayist; but each excelled in his way in startling his admirers by fresh glosses on familiar truths and whimsical, even paradoxical, inversions of accepted opinions; and a vindication of this criticism may be said to lie in the passages, where it is shewn that our poet saw his account in conveying usable points from what was then a work still under probation and still imperfectly understood even in France. Had Montaigne had under his eyes the English plays, especially those of higher reach, he would have been the first to adopt any suggestion, which happened to impress him. But he died a year before *Venus and Adonis* appeared, and, moreover, French writers, when they did not borrow from each other, usually resorted to the classics.

CHAPTER XIV

The Baconian Hoax—Shakespear's *Plays* (not his *Poems*) the reputed work of Francis Bacon, lawyer, philosopher, and essayist—Absence of any contemporary or early testimony in support of the claim of Bacon as a playwright—Indefeasible title of Shakespear to his own productions—Involuntary evidence of Robert Greene in 1592 to the eminence of Shakespear at that time as a dramatist—The likenesses of the poet and the tributes to his genius by contemporaries and intimate friends—Parallel calendar of the literary careers of the two men—Vast difference in their antecedents and surroundings—Possibility, rather than probability, of the concern of Bacon in some of the English historical plays in their first sketches—Remarks on the group or sequence of Histories—Sketch of the earlier life of Bacon—His ample leisure during many years—His versatility of talent not peculiar—The style of Bacon academical and hard both in the Essays and in his quasi-dramatic efforts for performance at the Inns of Court—Poverty of his acknowledged verses—Bacon connected with representations at the Inns from 1587 to 1613—Uniform un-Shakespearean character of the entire body of these compositions—The cryptogram a not uncommon vehicle for concealment in the days of Bacon—Its presumed origin.

SOME sixty years since more than the literary world was startled by the alleged discovery of grounds, on which the Plays, not the Poems, were ascribable to another. The claim advanced proceeded on purely internal indications, yet the plea sought corroboration from certain obvious circumstances belonging to the personality of the hitherto assumed author. It was pointed out—not for the first time—that on the one hand Shakespear was ostensibly an uneducated man, the son of uneducated parents, that next to nothing was preserved of his life and movements, and that, while his existence was proved, and it was not denied that he had published certain poems and sonnets, connecting him with one or more distinguished personages, he was simply incapable of composing the dramas, which had so far passed under his name without doubt or challenge. On the

contrary, this new school contended that more than one indication contributed to identify with these dramatic productions—if not, forsooth, with a moiety of all those written about the same time—no less a personage than Francis Bacon, who had left, it was asserted and even actually demonstrated, in a then not unfrequent form, in a cryptogram, the absolute proof of his responsibility for the plays, or at any rate, certain of them, ascribed to Shakespear, and habitually cited and acknowledged as his by intimate friends, acquaintances, and other contemporaries, including two successive sovereigns, who clearly entertained no misgivings of his claims as a dramatist, as well as no suspicion of the Baconian interest, by foreign adapters or admirers at or near the age itself, and by each succeeding one.

This silly and shallow fallacy, which proposes to deprive the country of one of its two greatest men, found a degree of support and adherence, chiefly in the United States, not very creditable to the parties concerned, and manifestly due to the failure, more natural perhaps abroad than on English ground, to grasp all the facts, and to take a comprehensive view of the question; and the Baconian parentage of Shakespear's Plays—not, let us remember, his Lyrics, for the Shakespearean authorship of which the testimony is too absolute even for the Baconians—became at all events a debatable theme at home and across the Atlantic, a more or less diffused creed, on which I understand that hundreds of waste-paper books and pamphlets have already been written. Yet it is safe to affirm that the title of Shakespear to his splendid literary estate, Plays and Poems alike, is perfectly unimpaired.

It will enter to some general extent into my plan to shew that (1) Bacon could not have written the Plays, or any of the Plays, as Shakespear left them; (2) that Shakespear did write them, as we at present possess them; and (3) that the Baconian theory may nevertheless have some measure of verisimilitude, yet in a very different way.

The knowledge that Bacon had written some kind of

poetry is more than three centuries of age. Aubrey¹ refers to the letter addressed by Bacon to "Mr. Davis," knighted in 1607, the well-known poet and brother lawyer, which is inserted in the collection published in 1702, and in which the writer solicits indulgence for "concealed poets." It may be thence augured that his correspondent was aware of Bacon having at this time (perhaps about 1600) written compositions in verse. Aubrey proceeds to quote the verses on a Bubble, printed by Farnaby in his *Ανθολογία*, 1629.

The Duke of Newcastle, in his *Triumphant Widow*, 1677, makes Justice Spoilwit say: "There was one Mr. Francis Bacon, a very pretty hopeful man of our house, that did write Essays." But the Duke does not suggest that he wrote plays, which would, had it been so, have impressed him more. Aubrey was most assuredly unaware, that the subject of his notice had done more than indulge his fancy, like his father before him, the Lord Keeper, who has left the world the metrical "Recreations of his Age."² Some of them were of a playful tenor, and all more than equal to the few things of the kind traceable to the son in occasional efforts of a lighter and different character. Aubrey does not, I submit, offer the least suggestion, that there was a current belief at that time as to Bacon having penned any important or distinct contributions to the national drama or even to undramatic poetry, for, had he cited the same author's partial version of the Psalms, which was perhaps unknown to him, he could barely have pretended that it was much more meritorious than the verses on a Bubble—any farther removed from Dr. Watts. At any occult key to dramatic labours of any kind Aubrey does not remotely hint. The copy of verses by Bacon, which is termed a parody, is of no farther significance than the tone, which recalls the melancholy Jaques—with a difference, possibly from having been a spectator at the play, and brought away the notion.

Not only in Shakespear's life-time were the Plays and

¹ Aubrey's Letters, &c., ed. Bliss, ii. 224.

² Folio MS. sold at Sotheby's, May 6, 1903, No. 122.

Poems equally published as his; but when he was no more, and while Bacon yet survived, they similarly continued to be so, without any ostensible demurrer on the part of Bacon or any of his friends; and the First Folio almost ostentatiously sets forth the authorship of Shakespear, as *Love's Labor's Lost*, 1598, the *Lear* of 1608, and the *Sonnets* of 1609, had previously done, while no fewer than five poetical miscellanies between 1599 and 1601¹ contained his apparently unchallenged contributions, accompanied by his name, and, which is perhaps more, certain pieces, which were disowned, not because he was not capable of writing them, but because he did not do so. Two at least of these appropriations were made, not by Shakespear, but by the booksellers under the influence of common knowledge; the 1598 one was probably due to Shakespear himself; and in the collective editions of the Plays men, who had been personally intimate with the poet, who had acted in these compositions, when they were brought on the stage, who enjoyed the opportunity far better than we do of hearing reports and rumours about the pieces and their origin, who might even have beheld their friend with his pen in his hand, with the unfinished manuscript before him, attested his exclusive claim within their information to the work.

There is at least no dispute that a William Shakespear lived between certain dates, published certain approved poems, was on friendly terms not only with other literary men, but with persons of rank and distinction, who were flattered by his compliments, and sensible of his power; and that he had been at a remarkably early stage of his professional career viewed by a certain coterie with more than sufficient jealousy and dislike to have led to the speedy exposure of his false assumption of undue credit, had there been such a matter within their cognizance. He was, as we all are aware, accused by Greene, as the spokesman of himself and others, of having dishonestly misappropriated

¹ *Passionate Pilgrim*, Bodenham's *Belvidere*, England's *Helicon*, England's *Parnassus*, *Love's Martyr*.

their material or, in the precise language of the complainants, of "having beautified himself with their feathers," or, as an interrogational spokesman for Greene puts it in 1594, "perjourned their plummes." The irritation was apt to become the keener from the concurrent rivalry of Marlowe, who threatened to become quite as grave a source of trouble to Greene and others, inasmuch as in his *Tamburlaine* he had so plainly shown his mastery of the "Cambyses vein," and a power of outstripping them all; and accordingly Marlowe involved himself in the same class of diatribe if not so pointedly worded. It is the more requisite to adduce this point, inasmuch as the ordinary impression is, that the enmity of Greene was concentrated on Shakespear.

The charge, so far as Shakespear was personally concerned, became public property in 1592 by the issue of Robert Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*; but the feeling had rankled in the bosoms of the writer of the pamphlet and his immediate set some time, we may be almost sure, before it found vent in type. Greene rightly or wrongly upbraided *Shake-scene* or *Johannes Factotum* with nefarious practices, or, if his arraignment may be translated into other words, he and some about him were becoming sensible of the rise of a new master and a new theatrical school; and if it be the fact that Gabriel Harvey, in his *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets*, apparently published a little before the *Groatsworth of Wit*, meant Shakespear, where he alludes, among "springing wits," "singularly to one, whom I salute with a hundred blessings," the irritation was naturally aggravated. To be assailed by Greene was an *ipso facto* title to the goodwill of Harvey. For the immediate purpose, the hostility of Greene is valuable, because it seems to intimate that he had no justification whatever for alleging, that Shakespear was guilty of a graver offence than carrying the authorized revision of other men's work so far perhaps now and then as to overlay and obliterate the First Sketch; nor would Shakespear have incurred the animosity of his fellow playwrights, had he limited himself to manuscripts submitted

to the managers by outsiders and amateurs. He presumed to trespass, of course with the concurrence of proprietors, on higher ground, and to imply practically that he could outdo Greene and his friends. On that point the world has long come to a conclusion, even if we accord to them their fair share of credit as aids and prompters; but the author of the *Groatsworth of Wit* performed, as it has happened, yeoman service in satisfying us for ever that in 1592 William Shakespear was already by the acknowledgment of a circle, in which we may include Peele and Marlowe, if not Munday, their superior as a dramatist, even if his performances were more or less under obligations to their *prima stamina*. Setting aside the qualified measure of appreciation by Spenser in *Colin Clout* of the so-called Aëtion (the Aëtius of Procopius), the author at any rate reckoned him as an independent unit. The poem was written in 1591, printed in 1595.

The crude engraved portrait by Droeshout accompanying the First Folio, of which a reduced copy occurs in the Poems of 1640, was apparently derived from a painting by the same artist, now in the Memorial Gallery at Stratford. But the main and solid point is this: that the William Shakespear interred at Stratford, and whose monumental bust is to be seen in the chancel there, and the William Shakespear whose name and semblance are so conspicuous on the title of the 1623 volume, were then accepted by common assent as one and the same. Indeed the three or four Shakespear likenesses, unequal as they are, and varied in detail and pose as they are, offer sufficient correlation to establish their appurtenance to one individual, and to relieve Francis Bacon from the suspicion of having written productions so foreign to his genius and faculty.

Shakespear-Baconism, originally a tender and perishable home-sprung seedling, was transplanted into a foreign soil, and gained an almost tropical luxuriance. An American atmosphere and a distant contemplation have evidently done something for the cause and the cry. It is a possibility that

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some of these adventurers, if they were to settle down for a season at Stratford and purchase Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines*, and digest the contents, might grow disposed to reconsider their signally precipitate and unwise verdict. For an acceptance or rejection of the proposition, that Shakespear comprised in his schedule of more or less re-written plays some in a transitional state sketched with or without his knowledge by Bacon, and placed in his hands in the customary way through a third party, does not substantially affect the central argument, that the Plays of Shakespear are by Shakespear.

There may be no harm in drawing up for reference and comparison a view of the respective occupations of the two men during the continuance of their literary labours. There is said to be always a danger in underrating adversaries, and we must do our utmost to lay this ungentle ghost, lest others should be emboldened by his example. Let us take these two almost contemporary biographies in outline from starting-point to close:—

CALENDAR OF BIOGRAPHICAL PARALLELISMS.

Bacon (1561-1626).

1. Born in London, Jan. 22, 1561, son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper, a native of Chislehurst, Kent, and of the learned Anne Cooke, who translated Jewell's *Apology*, printed in 1562 and again in 1564.

2. Sent to the University of Cambridge, on Oct. 13, 1574.

3. Leaves Cambridge to go to Paris, 1577, dissatisfied with academical methods, studies statistics and diplomacy, and writes a piece *On the State of Europe*.

Shakespear (1564-1616).

1. Born at Stratford, April 22-3, 1564, son of John Shakespear and his wife, daughter of Robert Arden, persons of yeoman rank and at least average education.

2. Educated at Stratford Grammar School, one of the best in England.

3. Pursues employment under his father, acquires a knowledge of rural life, probably witnesses exhibitions of travelling actors, is noted by his father for his humour, and described as "a good fellow" in conversation with a third party.

Bacon (continued)

4. Recalled to England by the sudden death of his father, 1578-9.

5. Engages in legal studies, tries to obtain official employment, writes pamphlets on current affairs. A very obscure epoch, 1590-5.

6. Becomes Counsel Extraordinary to the Queen, 1590. Forms a friendship with the Earl of Essex, who makes him a present of Twickenham Park, 1594.

7. Becomes member of Parliament for Middlesex, 1595. Continues to be in pecuniary straits, and is once arrested for debt. Composes masques and other occasional pieces of a dry and starched character, writes his *Essays* in Latin, and afterward translates them into English and publishes them, 1597.

8. Writes by royal command the justification of the death of Essex, 1601. Marries the daughter of a London Alderman. Knighted by James I., 1603. Counsel to the Crown, 1604.

Shakespear (continued)

4. Visits London as a boy, and meets the Burbages, Tarlton, &c., 1574-80.

5. Marries, November 1582, Ann Hathaway, with a dower of £60 of modern money. His daughter Susanna is born, May 1583. Leaves Stratford, where his father had become involved in pecuniary straits, and comes up to London, assists Burbage at his hostelry in Shoreditch. Enjoys opportunities of seeing the performances at his theatre, 1586-8.

6. Begins to write for the stage as a corrector of other men's plays. Is assailed by Robert Greene (1592) as a dangerous rival to himself and others. Publishes *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* (1593-4).

7. Produces *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II.*, *Richard III.*, &c., 1594-7. Applies, probably in his father's name, for a grant of arms from Heralds' College. Loses his only son, 1596. Presumed separation from his wife.

8. Purchases New Place, 1597, for £60. Continues to bring out year by year his great dramatic masterpieces. A scene from *Richard II.*, performed in the streets and other public places without his avowed cognizance, and during his presumed absence at Stratford, by the partizans of Essex, 1601.

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Bacon (continued)

9. Is still occupied, amid professional work, in literary labours. Publishes in 1605 his *Advancement of Learning*.

10. Pursues his philosophical researches *pari passu* with his political functions, 1605-09. Acquires habits of increased extravagance.

11. Attorney-General, 1613. Periodical reprints of the *Essays*. His expensive habits and love of splendour impoverish and compromise him. The man of genius and of the world, but not of business. Prepares the masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn to celebrate the marriage of the King's daughter to the Elector Palatine, Feb. 1613-14.

12. Rises in estimation as a lawyer and a philosophical and moral writer. His *Essays* are translated into Italian, 1618. Becomes Lord Keeper (1617), Regent during the absence of the King in Scotland (1617), Lord Chan-

Shakespear (continued)

9. Writes at short notice, for presentment before the Queen, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1602. *Hamlet* produced, 1602. Shakespear receives a magnificent eulogy from Jonson in the *Poetaster*, 1602, and (about 1605) an autograph letter from James I., which was still in existence in or about 1720. Buys a moiety of remaining lease of the great tithes of Stratford, &c., for £440.

10. Shakespear's *Sonnets*, written at intervals during many years, are published by the fuder of the MS. or papers, 1609. The dramatic series proceeds. Shakespear accumulates property. New Place let to T. Greene.

11. Shakespear retires from London and parts with his theatrical interests, 1613. Buys a house and appurtenances in Blackfriars as an investment, 1613, for £140, barring dower to his wife. Co-operates with Burbage in executing a commission for the young Earl of Rutland (1613). Probably witnesses the festivities at the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth and the visit of the Savoyard Ambassador to the Blackfriars theatre (1613). The man of genius and business—not (save the mark!) of letters.

12. At or near Stratford. Health fails. Makes his will, bequeathing most part of his estate to the Halls. His wife receives practically nothing beyond her strict legal lien on the

Bacon (continued)

cellor and Baron Verulam (1619),
and Viscount St. Alban (1620).
The *Novum Organon* completed
and printed (1620). The *History*
of Henry VII. published, 1622.
First complete edition of the
Essays appears, 1625, apparently
seen through the press by the
author. Dies in embarrassed cir-
cumstances, 1626.

Shakespear (continued)

estate. Dies. Is buried April 25,
1616.

In the Philosopher and Essayist we conceive that we realize a man of a totally distinct type. His birth was distinguished; on his father's and mother's side he had the promise of high mental gifts, and more than fulfilled it; the road to greatness was opened to him by all the advantages, which rank, influence, and wealth are capable of conferring; he gradually developed to the view of the world a commanding intellect, boundless ambition, an inextinguishable thirst for knowledge, and a literary aptitude at once of the profoundest and of the most multifarious reach. His versatility was almost a conceit. He seemed to aim at becoming the second Universal Doctor. But a rather material and interesting point of correspondence between Shakespear and him, and the contemporary of them both, Montaigne, is, that these three men were not estimated during their lives, or during a long course of years succeeding their deaths, at anything near their true value. We are able to glean, that Bacon was regarded as a learned and ingenious speculator, not quite so much so perhaps as his sovereign: but the world at large entertained no suspicion that he was of the intellectual magnitude, which the moderns tardily discerned; and the author of the *Novum Organon* and the *New Atlantis* was painfully aware of the fact, inasmuch that he entrusted to an unknown posterity the duty of assigning to him his proper station.

When one regards the chronological sequence or succes-

sion even of those works, which he lived to publish, their lofty aim, their varied character, and their laborious execution, one wonders in what manner Bacon contrived to spare from his almost incessant professional engagements leisure to commit to writing, when they had assumed a tangible form in his mind, this vast mass of matured and condensed thought; and more especially is such the case when he concurrently interested himself in mathematical studies, and was a reader of the technical works of Briggs and his follower Napier of Merchistoun, as well as perhaps of the continental emblem-writers of the day. We become aware that he employed secretaries and amanuenses, and even that he maintained at one time at Twickenham a scrivener's establishment to facilitate the production of fair copies—probably of any sort of manuscript matter, legal or literary, in hand. Yet the personal toil, where the topic was intricate and abstruse, must have been immense, and it was perhaps saved from being quite insupportable by what we know of the legible character of the author's writing—the Italian, not the Court, style. By his direct instrumentality or by the offices of editors, especially Rawley, most part of what he did is laid before us; but it is impossible to be assured that we have all. Rawley appears to have made himself well acquainted with the literary labours of his employer. He does not allude to his poetical efforts, nor did he deem the translation of the Psalms, the product of a sick chamber toward the close, as worth reprinting. He cannot have failed to have at least heard of it.

In connection with the clear need for clerical assistance, apart from the question of a concern in current dramatic literature, it is a matter of notoriety, that the scrivener was called into service at this time for every species of transcript, and that numerous manuscript copies of old plays and poems exist in this shape, including two or three of the Latin tragedy of *Richard III.* It was an expedient for saving time or for securing accuracy.

The tradition in the time of Charles II. was, that *Titus*

Andronicus was brought to the theatre "by a private author," and improved by Shakespear, after it had been some time on the stage under a somewhat different title. But the fact seems to be, that Shakespear did not intervene till Marlowe suddenly died in 1593, leaving that and other papers, some unfinished, behind him, and then the MS. having been obtained by a theatre from the same persons who found the *Dido*, *Edward II.*, and *Hero and Leander*,¹ the poet put certain touches to the play and perhaps proposed the name by which it was subsequently known. The immediate point, however, is, that there was according to Ravenscroft, the seventeenth century playwright, a system or custom in his time of MSS. being offered to the playhouses by private or anonymous authors, who thus submitted on speculation without any clue to their identity dramatic essays which they did not care to print, and which in their actual form were unsuitable for representation; and I harbour the opinion that, not such a piece as *Titus Andronicus*, but such as the first drafts of *Henry IV.*, *Henry V.*, and *Henry VI.* were not improbably of Baconian origin—far more probably, indeed, than from the pens usually named in connection with them, and that these products of a man of genius, wholly destitute of theatrical experience beyond such as sufficed to set forth a Court or Gray's Inn pageant, were laid before the more practical artist in a scrivener's transcript.

This suggestion defers to the passing remark of Aubrey, a witness not to be too indiscriminately dismissed, that Bacon was a good poet, and concealed his labours in that direction. Aubrey does not even say that the poetry was dramatic, and Bacon has left nothing in the lyrical way to entitle him to consideration.

The present writer might not have acquiesced even so far in the indication of Aubrey, had it not struck him, that

¹ Probably Edward Blount, who used the *Hero and Leander* himself, but transferred or surrendered the dramatic MSS. to those better able to deal with them.

the *History of Henry VII.*, not published till 1622, was in its inception or germ just such another lame offspring as the First Sketches of the other reigns, and was rewritten as a historical narrative at a posterior date, when the idea of bringing the subject on the stage had been abandoned by the author, or discouraged by those to whom he conjecturally submitted his other MSS. It is fairly obvious that the most dramatic episode in a Henry VII. play would be the very one, which so largely contributes to the success of Richard III.—the Bosworth scene; and then, moreover, this part of the English Annals had been preoccupied by at least one inferior pen, before the great poet undertook it as part of his series; and this circumstance suggests a farther speculation, whether the *prima stamina* of Bacon's *Henry VII.* was one of the two ante-Shakespearean dramas on the subject. We do not know that Bacon even wrote such a piece, but he evidently took an interest in the period and class of subject, and left behind him a MS. History of the reign of Henry VIII.

The group of Histories, in their original rough-hewn state, and in the shape which they assumed under the hand of Shakespear, extends from John to Richard III. We must all feel that we are treading on debatable ground, so far as the First Sketches go; but, after all, the attribution of these pieces is conjectural, and there is a complete set of the prototypes, so altered, modified, and strengthened by a second pen, or by other pens, that the first author is not always recognizable. As Shakespear's *Richard III.* is held to have preceded his *Richard II.* in order of production—though the proof is not very clear—it may well be the fact that, when the former was completed, it was discovered that the reign of Richard II. was alone substantially required to make the dramatization of English history consecutive from Edward I., *plus* John; and the annals of the country in such a shape were calculated, perhaps, to please and satisfy many, before the Duke of Marlborough pronounced his celebrated *dictum*. Yet there seems to have been, side by side with the appetite

for the successive chronological episodes in their eclectic or chastened dramatic shape, a call for an account of the several regnal epochs in book form, and a series of historical narratives by Sir John Hayward and others, ran parallel with the incessant theatrical presentations, possibly owing to a curiosity on the part of some to compare notes before or after. But the (more or less) orthodox account met with fewer students than the fourpenny playbook, and is still suspiciously common, whereas the other almost unexceptionally perished under the fingers and thumbs of audiences.

The more youthful transactions of Bacon are less obscure than those of his contemporary, mainly because he was led by his professional and political connections into a fairly plentiful correspondence with persons accustomed to preserve their papers, and from the same cause is mentioned in the correspondence and memoirs of others; and the silence of certain years is in fact due to the accidental absence of such lights. 1580-82, for instance, is an almost blank interval, during which he may have occupied his time with dramatic experiments—such as the *Conference of Pleasure*, which is analogous to the MSS. noted by Spedding under a later date (1592-95), and which that editor correctly describes as presenting “a certain affectation and rhetorical cadence.”

There was a protracted term, even down nearly to the close of the sixteenth century, however, before regular preferment arrived, when Bacon was without settled occupation and in want of money; glad to employ his versatile pen on any current question before the Government and the public; and to this epoch, if to any, we must, I think, assign desultory efforts to dramatize incidents or scenes in English history, partly suggested by visits to the playhouses, and partly so by the experiments, of which some are extant. There are indications that the composition of the historical series, commencing with *Henry IV.*, had already started in 1587, before Shakespear entered on the scene,¹ and when Bacon was still very young.

¹ Hunter's *New Illustrations*, ii. 63.

What Bacon may have written of this nature we are quite authorized to conclude unfit for theatrical use; but the first drafts of *Henry IV.*, *V.*, *VI.* were possibly his, yet not even as they were originally exhibited and published, but submitted to a revising pen. If that pen was Shakespear's, we are unable to believe that he engaged in this kind of work prior to 1590; and thenceforward during some years he did little else in a dramatic direction. In 1592, when the *Groatworth of Wit* appeared, the entire historical series, however, had reached the First Sketch stage, and had made Greene violently indignant and angry, which is another way of saying, that the latter believed Shakespear to have had a prominent hand in them.

That Bacon, situated as he was in constant and anxious expectation of legal advancement, did not venture to associate himself publicly with such performances, had they even been capable of utilization as he left them, is perfectly obvious, and, as I have suggested, his essays of this nature, if he made them, may have been among those which found their way to the theatre without any hint of their parentage—which were sent by hand in the shape of a transcript. As to elaborate concealment of his identity, I must own that I fail to perceive the slightest rational foundation for the idea; the nearest approach to a disguise of the kind was in a few early letters, where he whimsically subscribes himself *B. Fra.* A scrivener's copy delivered by an anonymous bearer was surely sufficient protection for an outsider or "private person."

It may be worth while to add that the playwrights, having omitted in their episodical History of England to treat the interval between the fall of Richard III. and the reign of Henry VIII., Bacon, occupying a wholly different position from that in which we see him before 1600, supplied in his prose History of Henry VII. the gap and the deficiency in a manner sufficiently conclusive to prove the need, which any productions, previously thrown into a dramatic form, would have had of an editor.

There was nothing very unusual in the wide range of the studies of Bacon. English scholars before and of his time signalized themselves, as we are enabled to judge from the extant lists of their works, as well as from the allusions readable in them, by their active interest in subjects as different in their character as in their importance; and so conspicuous a personage as Sir Thomas More, a contemporary of Bacon's father, and a fresh tradition in Bacon's own day, comes into our thoughts. If we take into our hands his *Collected Works*, 1557, a rather ponderous folio of 1600 or 1700 pages, we perceive that between its covers it embraces nearly every sort of polite learning and literary thesis, and that the drama and poetry are not overlooked. The present writer advanced many years since the plausible suggestion, that More had a hand even in a jest-book; and he is reported to have furnished John Heywood with the plots of some of his comic interludes. Versatility was in fact a sort of cult toward the Elizabethan era; but this admission is very far from helping the Baconian theorists, inasmuch as the same individual may display a share of proficiency in many directions, yet never attain supreme excellence in more than one. In the case of Bacon, that specialism was assuredly not poetry. We read with pleasure the *Essays* and *Sylva Sylvarum*, and perhaps the *History of Henry the Seventh*, and is it not so, that we take the *Novum Organon* on trust as a new philosophical gospel, which we have yet to master? We turn with a painful sensation to the version of some of the Psalms on two accounts, the physical prostration of the translator and the poverty of the translation; and we at length conclude, that the sole redeeming feature in the small volume is the interesting inscription in an extant copy to the pious George Herbert, interesting alike from its mutually honourable terms and from the insight, which it betrays, into the poetical bias of his "affectionate friend." Bacon looked up to the writer of the *Temple* as the happiest union of Divinity and Poesy.

The testimony of Aubrey, then, and the visible fruit of

the Baconian muse, combine, with the estimate of poetry presumed from the appreciation of Herbert, to discourage us from imagining that the author of the *Life of Henry VII.* ever rose to higher flights in metre and fancy; and I emphasize the work just mentioned because I have speculated whether Bacon can have had any hand in the first drafts of the dramatic series devoted to the reigns of earlier English kings, of the original sources of which so little is ascertained. It is impossible to believe that he failed to attend performances at the theatres, when any piece of congenial character or striking texture was announced; we are aware how his intellectual temper led him to become an essayist in almost all branches of human learning and culture; and our "concealed poet" may have been, even without the knowledge of those to whom he transmitted the MS. or MSS., the author of one or more of those imperfect historical dramas, first supplied with occasional touches, and eventually recast by a second and stronger hand—stronger, at least, in this class of work, both from a loftier imaginative scope and from a keener practical instinct.

I cannot help seeing how, in the *Essays*, whose sententious structure would bring them nearest to the dramatic form and feeling, there is an almost total absence of consanguinity. These productions are in fact the *Sermones Fideles*, which the author terms them in the original Latin; they rise above commonplace infinitely more seldom than those of Montaigne; and they would not have sufficed to lift the name of Bacon to its acknowledged height in spite of the bitterest detraction, had he not been emphatically in philosophical, what Shakespear was in dramatic, literature, and the French master in ethics.

Some time before the entrance of Bacon at Gray's Inn—in fact, when he was still in his infancy, the English versions of the *Phænissæ* of Euripides and the *Suppositi* of Ariosto had been presented there, no doubt under the superintendence of their translators or paraphrasts, Francis Kinwelmersh and George Gascoigne. These productions,

if they were seen by Shakespear, were presumably known to him only through the printed copies in the editions of Gascoigne; at any rate, he has shown an acquaintance with both in the *Winter's Tale* and the *Taming of the Shrew*. These dramas were exhibited at the Inn in 1566; but it was not till 1587 that Bacon, then a young man of six or seven and twenty, took part in an undertaking of an analogous character produced under the auspices of Kinwelmersh himself, then an elderly person, and others, and performed before the Court at Greenwich. This was the piece usually known as the *Misfortunes of Arthur*; and Bacon was no farther concerned in it than in the preparation of the dumb-shows.

But the introduction to theatrical life was not to be limited to this comparatively humble experiment, and there are indications among certain papers preserved in a mutilated state at Northumberland House, that Bacon, some years subsequently, addressed himself to the task of executing devices for representation at Court on special occasions. These exist only in the form and to the extent, that they have been printed by Spedding;¹ the remainder of the MSS. copies appear to have perished in the fire at Northumberland House in 1780. They, or some of them, exhibit the result, very frequently apparent in MSS. of early date, of having passed through the hands of a person, who has amused himself by scribbling in vacant places the names of then celebrated persons, Shakespear's among the number. The circumstance establishes absolutely nothing, as any one conversant with the practice must know and allow, but the presence of these scrawls has been enlisted by the Baconians on their side as a piece of subsidiary or collateral evidence. There has been a recent disposition to associate with these remains the name of the poetical writing-master, John Davies of Hereford, on the strength of some of the entries, which indicate a professional or at any rate cultivated character. Judging, however, from the salvage, the

¹ *A Conference of Pleasure*, &c., 8°, 1870.

MSS. here in question have no dramatic pretensions, and partake rather of the nature of addresses or themes; and they are perhaps merely of use as shewing that the writer had a taste, amid graver and more practical studies, for the sort of literature, which may be classable as bordering on the theatrical. This employment belonged to a stage of his career, when he was still enjoying a certain amount of leisure, and when his official rank and engagements had not rendered his direct and public attention to such minor unprofessional matters inexpedient on more than one account. In or about 1594 he seems to have commenced the formation of a commonplace book, in which he noted down, during a series of years extending beyond Shakespear's life, sentences and phrases from authors perused or studied by him for subsequent use in his own literary compositions. This MS., which is in the Harleian collection at the British Museum, is one of a sufficiently familiar type, and was scarcely worth printing. As a document or witness it is valueless.

In 1594, appeared the *Gray's-Inn Masque*, by Francis Davison, son of a Secretary of State, yet, like Bacon, distinguished by a keen relish for literature, and making his first mark as the composer of a quasi-dramatic piece. Davison was considerably the junior of Bacon; and it is not unreasonable to suppose, or dangerous to grant, that he imbibed from the latter, a member of the same Inn and a family connection, his taste for what we may term amateur theatricals, as well as for the *belles lettres*. It is shown¹ that both these personages were in touch with the Herberts of Wilton and other families, remarkable for their culture. Francis Davison, not long after his admission to Gray's-Inn, however, travelled abroad, and during some time we hear of him only through his correspondence with Anthony Bacon, brother of Francis; Davison appears to have visited Italy, or at all events he brought back with him a still extant copy of Tasso's *Torrismondo*, printed at Ferrara in 1587.

¹ Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*, 1626, prolegomena.

and left in it marks of his ownership and perusal; but whatever sympathy with dramatic and literary studies the younger Davison contracted, his kinsman, fellow-student, and senior was doubtless the initiating motor, the tutelary force. In 1594 Bacon was thirty-three, his friend only nineteen or twenty. The influence in this direction, to some extent reciprocal, was fostered and sustained by the circles, in which both moved. At the same time Bacon and Davison were destined to achieve widely different careers; and the former was to find himself in a position, where it became increasingly impracticable for him to devote his time, and, which was more, to lend his name openly to dramatic performances of any kind.

It is of considerable importance to become aware that Bacon did not abandon his propensity for the more academical side of dramatic composition, even when he had attained a conspicuous position as a legal adviser and officer of the Crown. For in 1613 he devised, as it was phrased in those days, a masque for presentation at one of the Inns of Court in honour of the marriage of the Lady Elizabeth Stuart, the king's daughter, to the Elector Palatine,¹ and this performance, which drew a large crowd of spectators, is precisely of the same quality as those earlier efforts of which I have just spoken, establishing the ostensible boundary of the power of the author in this direction—perhaps indeed the limit of his aim, if or *when* he found that his more youthful aspirations as a dramatist of the more regular type were good only as pegs or skeletons for another and more capable workman.

The employment of cyphers, which is traced from the Continent, and was an early diplomatic and political precaution at Venice, came into vogue in England, and was habitual during the Civil Troubles, and even in private communications of a delicate or compromising nature. The practice originally contemplated protection, not mystery; but the latter became in certain cases a collateral element,

¹ Hazlitt's *Manual of Old English Plays*, p. 150.

and assumed many arbitrary and fantastic forms, some of which, where the question has grown one of importance, have been laboriously unriddled, while others have resisted disentanglement. Less absolute in its cryptographic obscurity, yet germane in its character and object, was the Veiled Allusion and the occult signature; and these two modified and secondary types freely pervade the amatory literature and confidential correspondence of the period, which I am considering in more immediate connection with Shakespear.

A comparative study of the productions in verse of the fifteenth and succeeding century seems to reveal a change of treatment and tone, which it may not be too fanciful to ascribe to social agencies and the tendency of the line of demarcation between the classes to become narrower and less peremptory; and this circumstance is at least in some degree responsible for the necessity which was appreciated of disguising familiar expressions of sentiment on the part of an author to a noble friend in such a manner as to be intelligible only to a certain person or a certain set of persons. There undoubtedly is in our hands a fairly considerable variety of instances of this new aspect of the relationship of men of culture to men and women of rank, carrying with it a real or supposed responsibility, as I have said, for concealing confidential or clandestine intimacies from the public eye and ear; and we owe to such a condition of affairs toward the close of the Elizabethan era the modern hypothesis touching undercurrents of significant meaning in the Shakespear Sonnets, as printed in 1609.

I am capable of crediting any kind or degree of absurdity in such a direction. The motives might be manifold. The aim might be playful or politic. Occasionally we are unable to discern any aim at all, as in the reputed letters of Sir Christopher Hatton to Queen Elizabeth, under the enigmatical subscription *Lydde*, where there is nothing, so far as the sense can be made out, which might not have appeared above the real name of the writer; but in a tract of 1576 immediately relative to the affairs of the Nether-

lands,¹ we meet with a strange account how "by an other Embassadour lewde and vncomely letters haue bin written vnder fancy signes of the names of Oriana, Amadis, and such vnrincipely toyes . . . and howe the same rashe personage hath not bin misliked there for his so doing"—which appears equally to point to a confidential correspondence with her Majesty. The topic and the usage, however, had grown of sufficiently wide interest in 1591 to induce a publisher in London to undertake or recommend the issue of a Latin volume on the subject by Porta of Naples. It was dedicated to the Wizard Earl of Northumberland by a third party, who had perhaps brought over the MS.; it was printed *cum privilegio*; and the Earl mayhap paid the bill. We come to different ground, however, and a different phase of the question, when we are invited to regard the Sonnets of Shakespear as secretly importing a great deal more than is to be gathered on the surface or from the context, so far as there is such a thing as a context; and we perceive, besides, that we approach a field of discussion, which has received, since it was first opened about seventy years since, numerous fresh contributors, with a chronic tendency to periodical recruits, each apparently more imaginative than the preceding one, and each more energetic in the exercise of perverted ingenuity.

I have not dwelt very much on the Cryptogram itself, because I share the general feeling in England, that it is a pure emanation from the modern fancy, not the legacy of Bacon, not present to his mind. I believe that is a visionary conception, which, were it allowed, might be made of universal application to anonymous or doubtful pieces of literature.

Taking any part of the prose works of Bacon as tests of treatment and style, it is impossible not to be struck by the absence of affinity with the Shakespear dramas; and if Bacon

¹ *Certain Letters wherein is set forth a Discourse of the Peace, &c.* 1576. In a note of Queen Elizabeth to Burleigh in 1583, she addresses him as *Sir Spiritt*, and terms it a nickname.

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actually wrote any of the latter series—not the Comedies or the Tragedies, but the Histories, as they lie before us, one thing may be predicated of him, that he displayed a power of disguising his literary identity unattained by any other writer on record.

The Baconian doctrine is a purely modern one. It is of English origin, but of American development. If I were asked, by what agency it has been spread, I should be disposed to lay no slight stress on that unexampled absence of self-assertion on the part of Shakespear, which might have received a modifying or qualifying influence from records beyond our present ken, but which at the same time is of a piece with the remarkable circumstance that, while so many refer to him, he refers to so few—and then merely through *dramatis personæ*, and that, living at a point of time, when the commendatory verse and the elegiac tribute were rife, he abstained from identifying himself with either, unless, which is dubious, he actually gave the poem assigned to him in *Love's Martyr*, 1601, to the Editor, and unless, which is far more likely, he is answerable for the noteworthy lines inserted among the prolegomena to the second folio of Florio's Montaigne, and those attached to the portrait of James I. before his works in 1616.

Secondly, I should plead, and with some amount of confidence, that the coeval existence in England of two individuals,¹ more lavishly endowed with intellectual qualifications than any others of English or indeed any origin before or since, is so eminently calculated to impress observers or critics as an incredible phenomenon, that the apparent opportunity of escape from the miracle by the reduction of one of them to an *umbra* or a cat's-paw acquired a new force and a new felicity. It had always struck us as extraordinary, and almost as a problem to be explained, how three such profound thinkers as Montaigne, Bacon, and

¹ Among the pseudo-Shakespeareana put from time to time on the market, was a copy of Bacon's Essays, with MSS. notes ascribed to Shakespear.

Shakespear belonged to one era, nearly to the same exact interval of years, how they lived, as it were, side by side, yet strangers to each other: each so supreme in his way and so different in his origin and surrounding influences; and at length, according to some, the mystery is unravelled, the veil is rent asunder, and not Stratford, but Gorhambury, is entitled to the glory of being the First Village in the world—a Cathedral City without a Bishop—a Shrine with relics canonized by no Church—only by the voice of all educated mankind.

I have tried to procure support for my theory, that Bacon sent scriveners' copies of certain dramas anonymously to the theatre, with which Shakespear at the commencement of his career was associated, and that, if they survive at all, it is in the form of those *First Sketches*, which we familiarly know, and which, crude as they are, would have been still more so in the absence of editorship—that editorship, plural or singular; if the latter, Shakespear's: that is to say, before Shakespear took them in hand, they had perhaps already been subjected to a measure of revision by some one else.

Looking at the new Rutland clue, and at Bacon's share at the same date in devising the Gray's Inn and Temple Masque for the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth, are we not taken behind the scenes a little more, and enabled to see the sort of relationship in those days among persons interested in theatricals; and, if Bacon was personally acquainted with Jonson, it seems to amount to a mathematical sequence, that Shakespear and he must have met—that is, in later days, when each in his own way had so risen in public estimation and social standing. It must ever remain a debatable point, whether Shakespear was really Bacon's dramatic editor, and whether Bacon became aware of it.

There appears to me to be immense force in the twofold circumstance that the Baconians absolutely yield the Lyrics, the Sonnets inclusive, where there are one or two links with

the Plays, and are satisfied with depriving Shakespear of the latter, the songs inclusive; and that Jonson, who was in communication with Bacon as well as with Shakespear, would have been well-nigh the last man to have employed the terms, which he has subscribed, had he had any ground whatever for suspecting that Bacon had any hand in the matter even to the extent of a first sketch in any of the dramatic series, and could scarcely, again, have long remained in ignorance of the truth. Would he not have blurted it out to Drummond in 1619?

Granting that Bacon sent anonymously to the theatre, with which Shakespear was connected, the first drafts of the Historical Plays, what sort of reputation as a dramatist would he have enjoyed, had these achievements been left in their unwrought state, and been eventually published as his? What they are in the form, which they assumed under Shakespear's castigating hand, we know well enough.

CHAPTER XV

More favourable conditions for dramatic writers about 1597—Two independent schools of theatrical management—Henslowe and Alleyn—The Burbages, Tarlton, and Shakespear—Thomas Coryat on the English and Continental stages about 1610—Opinion of John Florio on the English drama of his day—Gosson and other contemporary critics—Some particulars about the Elizabethan theatres, internal arrangement, and prices of seats—Dramatic exhibitions in inn yards—Sixpenny rooms at the theatre and their occupants—Notices of contemporary visitors to the theatre—Robert Tofte and his mistress at the original performance of *Love's Labor's Lost* in 1598—Elizabethan play-bills altogether different from ours—Methods of advertizing new pieces—Contrast between the old and the modern presentation of plays—Preparation of the quartos—Special features of interest in some—Earliest collectors of them—Explanation of their present rarity.

THE Elizabethan drama which, even apart from Shakespear or any other individual writer, displayed a conspicuous and splendid advance on the contributions to the theatre, which preceded it, may be said to have become what we see it through agencies of comparatively recent existence. The beneficial influence of the revival of learning and of the restoration to notice and study of the ancient classical authors had not immediately affected England; but the introduction of typography, the spirit of foreign adventure, and the firm establishment on the throne of the house of Tudor, co-operated in drawing this country into closer intimacy with the continent and even with more remote regions. The taste for the Latin and Greek masters was followed by that for the more noted literary productions of France, Spain, and Italy; but a conversance with the languages long remained limited, and the result was, that the Englishman found himself provided in the course of

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about fifty years with a library of volumes, which formed a sort of cyclopædia of information on all the topics, which a writer for the stage was likely to utilize. In or about 1595 such an inestimable and indispensable resource already existed in a very advanced state toward completeness, and Shakespear himself was in possession, as it were, of the means of enlarging and varying his experience to an almost unrestricted extent. It may be affirmed that this development of literature in the shape of translations or, as in the case of Fox, Holinshed, and Hakluyt, compilations, was a circumstance which rendered the dramatic labours of the poet infinitely more practicable and possible, while the beneficent institution of public schools had initiated him at home in an acquaintance with Latin sufficient to lay the groundwork in his mind of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. Of no fewer than four of his dramas the scenes are laid in Northern Italy, and if we were to withdraw from the total all those which depended for their execution on a more or less recent enrichment of our literary stores from continental sources, we should encounter a sadly attenuated *residuum*.

The times had grown more propitious to the dramatist and actor about the middle of the long reign of Elizabeth: toleration of theatrical spectacles had the customary and natural effect of producing those more or less capable of their preparation and presentment; and the liking and favour of the Queen toward this species of amusement and instruction soon spread to the younger or gayer members of the Court. Such a revolution in sentiment had an almost necessary tendency to elevate the status of the higher class of performers, who soon associated on amicable terms with many of the nobility and gentry: and after the Stuart succession, so far from James I. bringing into fashion the bigotry of Scottish life and thought, the passion of the aristocracy for playgoing sensibly increased. The followers of the profession might still be rogues and vagabonds by a statutory fiction; but the licensed companies numbered

among them persons of respectable origin and unimpeachable repute. Such were Shakespear, the Burbages, Alleyn; such was Lawrence Fletcher, the son of a bishop, who in 1601 was admitted to the freedom of Aberdeen as the principal member of a theatrical company which performed there, and came recommended by James VI. And such indeed were all the Fletchers, Dr. Giles Fletcher having written that remarkable dramatic poem on Richard III., which preceded the Shakespearean play in the order of its appearance. Such, once more, were Nathaniel Field, alike actor and author,¹ son of John Field, the preacher against actors; and Augustine Phillips, of whom the latter left under his will in 1605 a thirty-shilling piece in gold to his fellow Shakespear—almost the sole memorial of the kind, and a fact first brought to light in a communication by Sir Thomas Phillipps to the Society of Antiquaries in 1837. Phillips, however, like Tarlton, Kempe, and Armin, was apparently a low comedian, who did not disdain farcical parts, and was perhaps not less acceptable to our poet on that account. The *Jig of the Slippers* by Phillips was licensed for the press in 1595; but it is not at present known. It probably followed the lines of Kempe's Jigs, which have equally failed to come down to us.

The standing of Shakespear himself when he had occupied some years in London as a dramatic recensor, and had given to the world two original lyrical productions, mentioned soon after their issue in 1593-4 with approval, might, under existing conditions, have entitled him to accept or cultivate the acquaintance of any member of that fashionable and brilliant circle, to which the playhouse was as much a part of daily life as the Court and the drawing-rooms.

Another and independent voucher for the social elevation and acceptability of the playwright and actor—not unfrequently, as we know, a dual function united in the

¹ His brother Theophilus was nominated in 1609, on the special recommendation of the King, to the living of St. Peter's, Cornhill, and became Bishop of Hereford.

same individual—is the very remarkable fact, that a considerable proportion of the theatrical performers mentioned in the first folio edition of Shakespear, 1623, occur as communicants in the books of St. Mary Overy's, Southwark, a church within easy reach of the Globe and other theatres, within the Liberty of the Clink, and readily accessible to our poet himself during his residence in the Borough, if he thought proper to take part in such observances. From the general tenor of his writings I should judge that, if he did so, it was as a matter of policy and form rather than of conscientious persuasion. This point does not invalidate the significant fact that the conventional estimate of the stage in the Shakespearian era had sensibly risen, and that the more distinguished followers of the profession at least were desirous of being recognized as reputable members of society, although the attendance at communion was, strictly speaking, enjoined on all inhabitants of the Liberty of sixteen years and upward.¹

Shakespear, in my view, would be a man who, whatever his private sentiments on religious points and observances might be, was guarded in his expression of opinion, where it was likely to be prejudicial to him in a professional way. He supplies us with the means of conjecturing what his notions were on many questions of this class in passages scattered through his plays—not his poems—notably where, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, he brings in the saying found in the interlude of *Lusty Juventus* fifty years before: "God is a good man," and where, in *King John*, he speaks of the brain as "the soul's dwelling-house," and, once more, in the closing act of *Antony and Cleopatra*, his allusion to "the little O the earth."² Yet the general bias of his mind was not to be readily disguised from his immediate or intimate surroundings, either at home or elsewhere, even had he so desired. I should be inclined to augur that Shakespear was not surpassed by Montaigne in the breadth of his sympathies

¹ Wheatley's *Cunningham*, 1891, iii, 425.

² I quote the passage *infra*.

or the courage of his speculations; but what the French writer laid before the world as his own utterances, the English one could put into the mouths which struck him as most appropriate or most telling.

Two types or schools seem to offer themselves to our notice in the theatrical annals of the Shakespear era: Henslowe and Alleyn, and the needy clients whom Henslowe at all events ungenerously remunerated; and, on the other side, the two Burbages, father and son, Tarlton, and, above all, the man of genius and of business, Shakespear who, as soon as his powers were known and felt, lost no time in emancipating himself from any undignified dependence on others, Henslowe included,¹ and learned to make the stage a source of more than bare subsistence. The two Burbages and Tarlton were persons already holding an excellent position, when Shakespear originally settled in the metropolis, and all three were professionally connected, and during many years neighbours in Shoreditch. It was suggested, and I think with some reason, by the late Dr. Ingleby that, whatever discredit had been thrown on the stage in the Elizabethan time, was due rather to the dramatic than the theatrical profession—to such persons as Marlowe and Greene, and that it was Shakespear and Jonson who helped to raise the Drama and its surroundings in the public estimation, even if they could not quite attain the point alleged by Dr. Watts to have been reached by Bacon in keeping within the bounds prescribed by Virtue and Religion.

It is observable that, at least at the very commencement of the accession of James I. to the British throne, such a volume as the *Jests of George Peele* should have found its way to Scotland, as some of them form *marginalia* to a re-impression at Edinburgh in 1603 of the *Thrie Tailies of the thrie Priests of Peblis*. In 1604, when the first of the English Stuarts entered London, the King's Company of Players was allotted a place in the procession next to the Falconers (a rather odd juxtaposition), and each of the nine members

¹ See a Note on *Titus Andronicus* *infra*.

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was allotted four yards and a half of scarlet cloth for the occasion. The name of Shakespear heads the list, and those of his fellows follow. Whether the precedence was accidental or otherwise, it is impossible to pronounce; but his claim and rank as a performer on the stage of his own and other men's dramas seem to be amply recognized. A contemporary series of engravings preserves the triumphal arches, under which the pageant passed, the chief figure on that day in all eyes not the chief figure any longer or ever to be again.

When the youngest brother of the poet, Edmund the playwright, a young man of seven-and-twenty, was committed to the earth in 1607, the event was honoured, doubtless through the instigation of Shakespear, then resident close at hand, by a special forenoon peal of the great bell of St. Saviour's. In the succeeding year, Lawrence Fletcher the actor received a similar compliment by an afternoon peal; and in both instances there was a fee of 20s. The case of Edmund Shakespear, a person of no individual consequence, may have been exceptional and the result of fraternal influence. But the ordinary fee at Stratford for ringing the sauncing bell within the usual hours was fourpence, and it was an established usage.

Alleyn and Henslowe, related by marriage, and equally men of practical character, did not confine their attention to purely theatrical speculations. They engaged with success in bear-baiting and similar spectacles, amusements which we decry as barbarous and degrading, even while we pursue others not less so at this very moment. Alleyn himself, a man of benevolent disposition, once baited a lion at the Tower, where Henry Stephens the Low-Country printer tells us that he saw one leave his food, and become entranced by the notes of a musical instrument; and Shakespear must have now and then looked on, when the bills had announced an entertainment at the Bear-garden. He makes Master Slender say that the sight was meat and drink to him: possibly it was so to the man who set down the saying, and

who, unless he has been belied, could enjoy all good things. The poet specifically alludes to the famous bear Sackerson in the *Merry Wives*, and in *Twelfth Night* he makes Sir Andrew Aguecheek regret that he had not followed the arts, instead of dancing, fencing, and bear-baiting. Henslowe, whatever view we may take of his character and culture, was equally with Alleyn a man of social repute, and became a Groom of the Queen's Chamber, which in one instance served him in procuring freedom from arrest in an action for debt as security for Lodge the poet.

Theatrical management at the outset was not improbably viewed as a more or less precarious speculation, only fit for persons of collateral resources; and so we find that as Burbage the elder had his hostelry, Henslowe could depend on his business as a dyer. The father of Alleyn kept the Pye near Bishopsgate; and as this was in the immediate neighbourhood of two or three other houses, in whose yards plays were exhibited, Alleyn, as a boy, may have been thus led to take an interest in such matters; but the founder of Dulwich College does not seem to have followed the paternal calling. Nor was this plurality limited to managers, for Tarlton, prince of the old school of low comedians, was concurrently and successively the keeper of more than one tavern, and evidently made the two vocations play into each other. In 1596, when the Prince of Anhalt was on his travels, and visited London in summer time, the theatre had developed into an important and favourite institution. Kohn says:—The Prince notices four playhouses only, but it is a known fact that there were at least seven, and perhaps ten, in 1596, of which some had been built posterior to Shakespear's arrival in London about ten years before. The author's speaking of four only is explained by the fact that not all the theatres were open at that time in summer, or perhaps the Prince had visited those theatres which were called "Public," and not those which were called Private.

The ancients, who applied our word for the entire building to the portion only set apart for the audience, conducted

their theatrical arrangements under different climatic and intellectual conditions from ours, so far as we are enabled to inform ourselves; but the supply of refreshments was even more a feature in the business than among us either formerly or now. How, again, the commissariat was ordered, we do not hear; but in England it is so much the case, that the *buffet*, as we term it, has always been a prominent part of the undertaking, that the Elizabethan theatre may almost be said to have been an evolution from the tavern or hostelry, as we at present observe in such institutions as the Gaiety, the Criterion, and the Pavilion. The fellowship between the playhouse and the restaurant was of very early growth and uninterrupted in its continuance, and a favouring cause was perhaps the incessant multitude of strangers, who had no fixed or regular domiciles in London, and of whom the foreign section was habituated to restaurants. In fact in such universally accessible books as Pepys's and Evelyn's *Diaries* one perceives, how usual it was to dispense hospitality in this way instead of receiving visitors at home; and to-day the Londoner still gives his friends a dinner at the hotel, as a prelude to a visit with them to the playhouse under the same roof and management.

Hentzner and other writers of the day inform us that apples, pears, and nuts were sold in the Elizabethan and Stuart theatre, and we collect that a method of denoting displeasure at a performer was to throw a pippin at him, a practical kind of criticism limited, no doubt, to the gallery and pit. This was known, it seems, in 1629 at all events, as pippin-pelting. But, long before that time, in one of Tarlton's *Jests*, a fellow is represented as wantonly throwing a pippin at that celebrated comedian, when he was performing at the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, and furnishing him with an occasion for one of his *extempore* sallies, as well as for a subsequent retaliation.

Gosson, in his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, printed about 1581, exhibits the peculiar animosity of a renegade

against his original occupation and study. He evidently intends to attack the class of subject and plot, which the immediate predecessors of Shakespear had introduced, and which the Stratford poet carried to such perfection and refinement, where he says: "When the soul of your plays is either mere trifles, or Italian bawdry, or wooing of gentlewomen, what are we taught?"¹ So early as 1553, Wilson in his *Art of Rhetoric* had denounced the employment of strange inkhorn terms; Gascoigne equally condemns phrases which smell of the inkhorn; and a few years later Puttenham, in his *Art of English Poesy*, 1589 (written some years prior), alludes to the adoption at the theatres of learned or foreign phrases, "fetched from the inkhorn or borrowed of strangers," which implies a resort to continental models; but he also leads us to understand that the less educated part of the audience paid greater attention to the show than to the dialogue. Sir William Cornwallis,² more particularly speaking of Paris Garden, writes: "There is another sort worse than these, that never utter anything of their own, but get Jests by heart, and rob books and men of pretty tales, and yet hope for this to have a place above the salt."

In the Prologue to the *Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalen*, a play, 1566, there is a mention of halfpenny and penny places at theatrical exhibitions; but whether such a tariff referred to the provinces or to inferior houses, one cannot be quite clear; but just about the same time, in a jest-book of 1567,³ a penny or even a halfpenny is said to be accepted *at the gate*, two men standing there with a box, "as the fashion is," to take the money. The anecdote seems to indicate what was then the average recognized demand. Earle, referring to the *comings-in* of a player about 1626, tells us that they are tolerable, yet like Halifax great Vicarage, mostly in twopences, implying that the

¹ *English Drama and Stage*, 1869, p. 181.

² *Essays by Sir William Cornwallis the younger*, 1606, sign. H 3.

³ *Tales and Quicke Answers*, 1567, No. 133.

actors were sometimes sharers in the proceeds of performances. The twopenny places were usually patronized by the inferior gentry. A silver half-groat represented about a shilling of our currency, so that this was really a substantial charge. At private houses certain persons were allowed to sit on the stage, for which the charge was sixpence extra. This practice naturally entailed occasional inconvenience and confusion, as we see from a passage quoted by Collier from the Induction to Marston's *Malcontent*, 1604. Fitzgeoffrey, in his *Satires*, 1620, referring to a gallant of the times, says: "Turne oft in Pauls, call for a stoole o' th' stage"—as if it were a mark of distinction to occupy such a place.

In *Martin's Month's Mind*, by John Penri and Job Throckmorton, 1589, the writers tell us that the price of admission to the theatre was a penny, that is to say, a silver penny of Elizabeth, worth about sixpence of our reckoning. But Lambarde, in his *Perambulation of Kent*, written in 1570, lets us into the secret that it cost three pence to get a good place, namely, a penny at the gate, a penny at "the entry of the Scaffold," and a penny for "a quiet standing"—about eighteen pence altogether of our money. In the *Raven's Almanac* by T. Decker, 1609, there is a mention of the two-penny galleries, in "the most perspicuous place of which you shall clearly, and with an ape's eye, behold all the parts."

At the commencement of the Civil War, and just before the suppression of the theatres, the author of the *Stage-Player's Complaint*, 1641, specifies sixpenny rooms, occupied by women of bad character in the hope of attracting prentices or lawyers' clerks, and threepenny galleries; so that prices seem to have risen in greater proportion than the probably lower value of money.

The admission to Davenant's *First Day's Entertainment at Rutland House*, 1657, was five shillings, and 150 persons attended; as it was a sort of private performance, there was probably only one tariff; and, again, where a party of distinction visited the theatre, some special arrangements

were concluded. The charges, when the Savoyard Ambassador attended the performance of a new play at the Blackfriars in 1613 with his suite, were £3, 10s. 0d., and on a second occasion £2; Paris Garden—perhaps to witness a bear-baiting—cost only £1. These sums were in money of that time, and the whole was at the cost of his entertainers. The probability is that in these cases, and at ordinary attendances of royalty, private boxes with hangings were specially prepared.

But in 1677 the ordinary charge for seats in the boxes on first nights had risen to five shillings—a really extravagant figure, when we consider that the sum represented thirty shillings or upward of modern currency. The taste for theatricals had since 1641, however, experienced a great revival.

Some interesting and prizable particulars of contemporary performances of Shakespear's plays are already before the general reader. They are derived from the Diaries of John Manningham and Dr. Forman, and from incidental notices in a variety of directions and ways, notably in Kempe's *Nine Daies Wonder*, 1600; in Wright's *Passions of the Mind*, 1601, where we are introduced to the wide slops of Tarlton and Kempe, not very dissimilar from those of the clown of our own time; in the case of *Pericles*, where the attendance of George Wilkins with his note-book bore fruit in a novel on the same subject from his pen;¹ and in a poem by a Yorkshireman, George Daniel of Beswick, who describes Falstaff, as he saw him on the stage about 1640. But the mention in a printed book of 1598² of the visit of Robert Tofte to the exhibition of *Love's Labor's Lost*, then a recent play, which he had seen on its original appearance some time before, in company with his mistress, Euphemia Carill, of Warrington, has a bearing of its own, although the writer—Tofte himself—tantalizes us in a not unusual way by keeping strict silence as to

¹ Randolph the poet seems to have witnessed the presentation of *Pericles*. He twice refers to the piece.

² *Alba. The Months Mind of a Melancholy Lover*, 12°, 1598.

what he thought of the piece and the author, and as to the nature of the cast. All that he deemed it necessary to say was that the title and texture of the drama caused him pain, and that he stayed in the house reluctantly in attendance on the lady. Tofte by no means stood alone in failing to foresee that posterity would have been in an immeasurably greater degree his debtor had he at any rate supplemented the expression of his transient personal sentiments with a ray or so of light on the scene under his eyes.

I must pursue the anecdote of Tofte and his mistress so far as to point out that, at the end of his translation of Boiardo's *Orlando Inamorato*, published in this same year, he describes himself: *Il Diagraziato R. T. G[entilhuomo]*, and there seems some link between the *Alba* and the Boiardo, as regards their common suggestion of despondency—perhaps only the fugitive *ira amantium*. The main interest for us is his presence at the theatre on the present occasion, and his title to a place among Shakespear's travelled acquaintances.

At this time it may be just remarked that Anthony Babington resided at Warrington, and exhibited his literary tastes by compiling a commonplace book of contemporary verse, dated 1596, and now in the British Museum. Four years after, he prefixed a sonnet to Bodenham's *England's Helicon*, 1600, where we find matter common to the MS.

With more immediate reference to such lights and guides as Forman and Manningham, there is the encouraging contingency, that other Notes on the Plays, as they were witnessed by contemporary frequenters of the theatre, set down at the moment, as it were, in the contemporary atmosphere, may await casual revelation by some fortunate explorer. It merely occurs to me to repeat that George Chapman, in his maiden dramatic publication, the *Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, 1598, furnishes evidence of having attended the performance of *As You Like It*, or of having had under his eyes an early MS. copy.

Hentzner in his *Itinerary* is more sparing than we could have desired in his account of this side of his English experiences, where he might have so advantageously have been communicative; but he saw among us little more than he could see at home; and the Duc de Rohan, who visited London in 1600, is yet more reticent. The former merely observes: "Without the city are some Theatres, where English actors represent almost every day Comedies and Tragedies to numerous audiences; these are concluded with variety of dances, accompanied by excellent music, and the excessive applause of those that are present."

In the uncompleted *English Drama and Stage*, 1869, by the present writer, will be found a large assortment of facts and references, illustrating Shakespear from this point of view, and assisting us to realize the condition and aspect of the London playhouses in or about his time. There are entries of obvious pertinence almost innumerable: how ladies mistook the actors for the persons whom they represented; what comparison the singers of ballads in the streets bore to the singers on the stage; the contrast of the entertainment at the Bear Garden with that at the playhouses; allusions to the two Bull¹ inns in Gracechurch and Bishopsgate streets, and the Cross-Keys, in whose yards dramatic performances were held; the early and inveterate fondness of Londoners for plays and interludes; the strewing of the stage with rushes; the dressers or tiremen at theatres; and the high price charged for tobacco there by the tobacco-men, who asked for just as much as would fill a penny pipe what was not twelve-pence a horseload. Hentzner was much struck in 1598 by the habit of smoking the weed in clay pipes.

Of engraved views of the English theatres that familiar one of the Globe on the Bankside is, no doubt, the earliest, and we possess it in two shapes: the old and the new house (after the fire of 1613). The most ancient

¹ In a Stuart broadside cited by me (*English Drama and Stage*, ix.) players are under the sign Taurus.

interior appears to be that accompanying Alabaster's *Roxana*, 1632, which has also been published.

The dearth of personal testimony to the state of the theatres of London in former times may make it warrantable to quote a passage from a volume of *Travels in England*,¹ written by Henri de Misson and published in 1698, when many of the old-time traditions were still preserved. The author is not so explicit as might have been desired; but he states certain facts, which came under his notice. "There are two theatres in London," he says, in a marginal note; adding, that a third has just been opened, "one large and fine, where they sometimes perform Operas, sometimes Comedies; the other smaller, which is only for Comedy. The parterre is in the form of an amphitheatre and supplied with benches without backs, covered with green cloth. The men of quality, especially the young ones, some respectable ladies, and many young girls seeking their fortune, sit there pell-mell, talk, play, chaff, listen to what others are saying, or not. Farther, against the wall, under the first gallery, rises another amphitheatre which is occupied by persons of the highest quality, among whom one observes very few men. The galleries, of which there is only a double row, are filled by the common sort of people, and more so the upper one." In the Epilogue to *Timoleon*, 1697, the closing lines are spoken to the side-boxes.

Thomas Coryat, who had opportunities of comparing the English and Venetian stages in the days of the poet, gives in his volume of *Travels*, published in 1611, the superiority to his own country. Speaking of Venice, he observes: "The play-house is very beggarly and base in comparison of our stately playhouses in England, neither can their actors compare with us for apparel, shows and music." On the other hand, John Florio speaks very disrespectfully even of the historical type of drama, which

¹ *Memoires et Observations Faites par un Voyageur en Angleterre*; A la Haye, 1698, 8°. Comp. Donaldson, *Theatre of the Greeks*, 7th ed. 1860, p. 220 et seqq.

we usually credit the poet with having brought to such a height of perfection, and suggests that it was inferior to the Italian mode; and certainly a Venetian spectator—nay, Florio himself—at the performance of the *Merchant of Venice* or *Othello* in London might have well wondered, whence the author obtained his ideas, even while, in the case of the Moor, he might have appreciated the passion, and have forgiven the violence. Nor would the *Burt, Master Constable* of Middleton, 1602, Webster's *White Devil*, 1612, or the *Venice Preserved* of Otway, 1682, have been regarded as truer to historical facts and local colouring by an Italian spectator. Webster thought himself at liberty to transform a member of a noble Italian family (not even a Venetian) in the drama just named into a Venetian courtesan. Otway's work, whatever its technical merit may be, is historically waste paper. So Shakespear by no means stood alone in his faulty rendering of incidents and plots, and even his academical contemporaries and scholars, such as Jonson, not seldom tripped in their history and geography.

Florio, who may be assumed to have also witnessed the original presentation of *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, doubtless included them in the same censure. All four dramas were of Italian origin. Any improprieties in *Hamlet* and such other pieces, as purported to reproduce historical events, the immediate critic would be less likely, as he was less competent, to detect; he confines himself to the inaccurate manner, in which Shakespear and the actors who interpreted his text, rendered the subject, so far as his local knowledge enabled him to judge. Coryat first saw women on the stage at Venice in 1610. He had heard, he says, that they had sometimes appeared in London. But such had been the case only in private entertainments. The Venetian actresses shewed, he thought, as good grace, action, gesture, and whatsoever is convenient to a player as any man he had ever seen. So far as the English stage is concerned, we possess very few reliable indications how far Shakespear and contemporary play-

On the other hand, the latter-day treatment of dramas cast in a remote time, and either here and there, or entirely on foreign soil, is far from unexceptionable, for in spite of the most elaborate and conscientious efforts to place such pieces effectively on the modern boards, there cannot fail to be in a certain measure a deficiency of the original costume and atmosphere, while the inherent improprieties in the description of localities and persons abroad, from hearsay or guess-work, are irremediable in the absence of the author and those who were at his side, and learned their parts under his eye, as an artist now assumes the right to dress and interpret at his or her pleasure with mixed results. The writer escapes these drawbacks, because he dispenses with the theatrical wardrobe, and deals only with isolated passages, so long as his text strikes him as correct.

The anecdotes, which we have inherited, of the approach of Shakespear to the Court in connection with the performance of his own pieces or even those of others belonging to his theatre, have to be read with a recollection, that all theatrical spectacles exhibited before our earlier sovereigns took place, not in the ordinary playhouses, but at the private one, long known as the Cockpit, in Whitehall. This consideration modifies, and assists in explaining, the story of Elizabeth honouring the dramatist-actor with a particular notice on one occasion; and a similar criticism may be said to apply to the theatricals at Oxford in 1605, celebrating the visit of James I. to that city and university. Incidents of this class, described without an allusion to the surrounding circumstances, are liable to misconstruction.

Anyone tolerably conversant with the drama of the period will probably assent to the comparative freedom of the Shakespearian series from grossness, and that is the very expression which the dramatist uses in referring to what were known as "dead men's fingers," but sometimes bore a coarser name. How far this valuable result is attributable to natural inclination, and how far to politic restraint, it is imprudent to assert; but the opportunities, which the poet

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enjoyed, of gauging the public temper, while he served his apprenticeship to the profession as a corrector and performer, possibly influenced him in excluding from his texts passages and expressions likely to militate against the general acceptability of his pieces, when he commenced on his own independent account as a writer, and to make them less appropriate for representation at Court or in what was known as a private house. At the same time, in many passages of masterly excellence and supreme value, words and forms of expression meet the eye, which are incapable of repetition on a modern stage or in a modern drawing-room. It must be recollected, however, that the plays of Shakespear, in comparison with many both of earlier and later date, are remarkably decorous, and that, down to the eighteenth century, a licence, no longer tolerated, prevailed in phraseology and innuendo among both sexes and all classes—a licence not very far removed from that of the Court and times of Charles II.

Play-bills, as we understand the term, were unknown in, and indeed long after, the days of our poet. What are described in more than one place as bills of the play were advertisements attached to walls or other conspicuous places, announcing a forthcoming performance. The play-books specified in connection with the presentation of the miracle-play of *St. George* at Bassingbourne in 1511 were doubtless manuscript prompter's copies.¹ In *Merry Tales and Quick Answers*, 1567, No. 133, we have a story "how a merry man devised to call people to a play," and the account opens thus: "A merry man, called Qualities, on a time set up bills upon posts about London, that whosoever would come to Northumberland Place, should hear such an antic play, that, both for the matter and handling, the like was never heard before. For all they that should play therein were gentlemen." The narrative proceeds to say that a great crowd was attracted, and that the whole affair was a hoax. The point is, that we here see, what the play-bill was; and

¹ Hazlitt's *Warton*, 1871, ii. 233.

the same sort of deception, practised by a Lincoln's Inn man in 1602,¹ shews, if it were necessary, a similar use of the expression. In 1587, a privilege was accorded to John Charlwood for the "onely ymprintinge of all maner of Billes for players"; and this right appears to have been subsequently exercised by James Roberts, whose place of business in Barbican had been previously that of Charlwood, and was convenient for the East End theatres. In his *Wit and Mirth*, 1629, containing anecdotes of anterior date, Taylor the Water-Poet narrates a story of Nathaniel Field illustrative of the practice of advertizing new plays on posts everywhere.

The practice of "setting up bills," preparatorily to the exhibition of a play, was equally usual in Germany, and Kohn furnishes a highly curious document² of this class, seeming to point to a preference for short pieces and a call for light, amusing, and even ludicrous, matter; and a broadside of a precisely analogous description has descended to us, shewing that in 1541 the *Mystere des Actes des Apostres* was announced as about to be exhibited in Paris by cry and proclamation.³ The only English document which has fallen in the way of the writer is a notification from the press of the above-named Charlwood of a tilting match to take place about 1590 at Westminster. It is in the form of a challenge by Callophisus to any one questioning the virtues of a certain unnamed lady; the affair had been postponed from the 15th to the 22d January, and was to be honoured by the royal presence.

A second mode of notifying forthcoming novelties which survived Shakespear, and remained in vogue till the more modern type of play-bill arose, was an intimation of the project through the Epilogue or Chorus at the end of a play, as in the *Second Part of Henry IV.*, where we have:—

¹ Collier's *Bibliographical Catalogue*, 1865, i. xlv., quoting a letter of John Chamberlain, 19 Nov., 1602.

² *Shakespeare in Germany*, 1865, facsimiles at end.

³ *Le Cry et Proclamation Publique pour iouer la Mistere des Actes des Apostres en la Ville de Paris*, 1541. Reprinted in facsimile, 8vo, 1890.

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"If you be not too much cloyd with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katherine of France"; *Henry V.* concludes with the lines beginning—

"Thus far with rough and all unable pen
Our bending author hath pursued the story—"

And the Chorus farther alludes to the plays on Henry VI., "which oft our stage hath shown." But there is no promise of new pieces on that reign from Shakespear's hand as author or editor. The Epilogue and Chorus, from which the foregoing extracts are given, are not in the foundation-plays; yet withal there is the Marlowe and Kyd leaven, the First Sketch rawness.

A word may be here said of the expressions *humble* and *bending author*, as they seem to be very early examples of such propitiatory phraseology; and the second form indicates that the lines were delivered in a kneeling posture.

There used to be a commonly accepted statement, that Ravenscroft's *Anatomist* was the first drama sold in the theatre; but nothing is more improbable or indeed untrue. To go no farther, the dramas of Shakespear from 1597 onward, published at fourpence of the time, owe in fact their unique scarcity in the *editiones principes* to their purchase by the immediate audience and destruction after a first perusal. They were received as aids to the performance, not as literary possessions, and the issue was presumably limited. Fennor, in his *Descriptions*, 1616, explicitly states that there were then at the theatres persons whose function it was to offer books for sale, before the performance commenced, and whose cry was—"Buy a new book?"

Nevertheless, five collectors and preservers of the quartos of Shakespear and others are now known to us; Humphrey Dyson the Notary, of whom we hold several in the first impressions in the finest state; Henry Oxinden of Barham, near Canterbury, who enumerates in his MS. Common-place Book, 1647, 122 separate pieces, bound up by

him in six volumes; Griffith Williams, Bishop of Ossory (1590-1672), Curzon-Howe family of Gopsal, Leicestershire, in whose hands a poorly preserved collection, originally (I think), bound up together, and including *Richard III.*, 1597, and *Hamlet*, 1604, till quite recently (1907) remained, and finally an individual who transmitted seventeen which, it is believed, are at present at Manchester.

The Oxindens are elsewhere specified as being among the Kentish gentry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who distinguished themselves by their taste for literature. This series of volumes included Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, *The Tide Tarrith No Man*, *The Tuning of a Shrew*, 1594, Marlowe's *Dido*, 1594, Peele's *Edward I.*, Shakespear's *Hamlet*,

Hen: Oxinden's

Hen: Oxinden's of Barham Ap: 14. 1659.

1603, and Chapman's *Byron*, of which two, the *Ralph Roister Doister* and the *Hamlet*, are no longer known in a complete state; and I am strongly disposed to identify the property with that found to be preserved in 1810 at Lee Priory, the seat of Sir Egerton Brydges, and in 1826 sold by auction. Here there were 142 lots; but the local and other conditions are too persuasive to allow one to doubt the fact.¹

A second extremely important assemblage of Shakespear and Elizabethan quartos, that formerly the property of the Bishop of Ossory, was also bound up (like Oxinden's) at the time in a series of volumes, of which two were abstracted under unknown circumstances, and sold at Manchester and in London respectively in 1881 and 1905. The others were

¹ Curiously enough, Triphook of St. James's Street, in a catalogue issued about the same time (probably before) had *Therites* and *Jack Juggler* on sale (Nos. 323-6). As Brydges was sometimes in financial straits, he may have first tried to sell the plays or some of them through Triphook.

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dispersed in London in 1907, and were, as they had long been, in the possession of Lord Mostyn.¹ They comprised some long-sought *desiderata*, but no Shakespearean surprises.

With reference to the preparation of the quartos there is the consideration, that the text depended not only on the copy, but on the printer employed² and on the accuracy of the MS. supplied, not by the author, but by some attendant at the theatre, who had obtained a transcript prior to the performance to secure its committal to type in due time for sale in the house or at the doors. The practice was one dependent on circumstances, and the printer seldom enjoyed the opportunity of examining the matter handed to him, nor did he perhaps very often demand its credentials. When the *Second Part of Henry IV.* had been printed in 1600, and many copies distributed, it was found that some of the text was deficient, and in the residue of the impression four pages were inserted—at whose instance we do not hear, possibly at Shakespear's own. Again in the case of *Richard II.*, 1597, the Devonshire copy offers important various readings for the better, appearing to shew a hand behind the scenes, before the whole impression was printed, and under such circumstances it was more probably than otherwise that of the writer, who appears to have been rather more on the alert than usual in paying attention to typographical details.

The conditions under which we hold in our hands the first quarto of *Love's Labor's Lost*, 1598, exhibit a different peculiarity. For, either while the MS. was at press, or prior, some one—Shakespear, I apprehend—introduced a new passage in one part of a scene without discovering that substantially similar matter was already a page or so away in the printer's copy. The two detached states of the

¹ They are identical with the series mentioned to me many years since by Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps as being at Mostyn or Gloddaeth. See my *Roll of Honour*, 1908, p. 262.

² In the case of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, 1590, Richard Jones the printer confesses that he had suppressed, on his own initiative, certain matter which had formed part of the play on the stage.

text are most readily seen by juxtaposition, and do not impress us very favourably with the vigilance of the poet as a proof-reader:—

First insertion.

"From women's eyes this doctrine
I derive:
They are the ground, the books,
the academes,
From whence doth spring the true
Promethean fire."

Second insertion.

"From women's eyes this doctrine
I derive;
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain, and nourish
all the world;
Else none at all in ought proves
excellent."

There is not much to be said, by way of preference, in favour of one version or the other; but the coexistence of the two is a circumstance without an absolute parallel in the literary history of the poet, so far as we are admitted to a knowledge of his methods apart from the final settlement exhibited in the folio of 1623.

The title-pages of the quartos were, however, as a rule, the handiwork of the stationer, who issued them; and they are not, on the whole, immoderately pretentious. Yet in that of the *Merry Wives*, 1602, the humorous and laughable side is accentuated, and clearly intentional prominence is given to Falstaff, Sir Hugh Evans, Shallow, Slender, Pistol, and Nym. The authorship is perhaps betrayed by the error in describing Sir Hugh as "the Welsh Knight." The piece must have been viewed on the stage as a farce rather than a regular comedy, and when it was presented in book-form, there was an aim to put the same attribute distinctly forward.

CHAPTER XVI

Principle of dramatic adaptation of great antiquity—Abundance of MSS. submitted to the theatres by outsiders as well as professional dramatists—Pieces which may have come in this way to Burbage's Theatre, while Shakespear was serving him as an Editor—*Arden of Feversham*, *Warning for Fair Women*, *Mucedorus*, &c.—A Shakespearian Apocrypha—Absence of a law of copyright—Shakespear predisposed to treat all available material as his own property—Sciography—Robert Greene and his friends—Their attacks on Shakespear—Greene's own sins—Shakespear between 1587 and 1592—His earlier work solely adapted material—His method—His rapidity or quickness of study—Vast difference between the first sketch and the perfected work—Great advantage of elaboration of outlines—His probably inconsiderable obligations to book-learning—Publications within his reach, to which he may have resorted in unequal measure—Absence of collaboration in his plays.

THE process of adapting dramatic compositions is probably almost as ancient as the drama itself. The presentment of a piece on the stage even in the most primitive times was apt to reveal defects, which were supplied by the writer himself, his friends, or his successors; and even the works of *Æschylus* were thought to stand in need of early editorship. Of about an hundred and thirty plays ascribed to Plautus, it is stated by Aulus Gellius that only about a fifth was actually from his pen, the remainder being works by anterior playwrights, and revised by him to render them suitable for an improved, or at all events altered, taste; the *Menæchmi*, the production with which the English student is most familiar, is taken to have been borrowed from Epicharmus, who lived in the fifth century B.C.,¹ and was contemporary with *Æschylus*. These references are worth notice, because to some extent they display a perfect analogy with the state

¹ Donaldson's *Theatre of the Greeks*, 1860, pp. 165-6.

of the theatre, when Shakespear first undertook to castigate and embellish certain manuscript efforts of others, some already introduced on the boards, others deemed impracticable without previous recension, before he commenced his own independent career as a dramatic creator. He started by building on other men's foundations, as Thomas Durfey admits that he himself did; but he succeeded better than Durfey.

Having fixed himself in the metropolis about 1587, there is no substantial ground for the hypothesis that he quitted the scene of his first entrance on life and apprenticeship to the drama during several years, unless it was for a brief visit to his Warwickshire home, while connubial relations were still unstrained; and the theory, that he accompanied the players, who visited Stratford in the year just named, appears to be unsustained either by evidence or likelihood. He was only five-and-twenty, and had the task before him of shewing his quality, before he could emerge, even with the help of well-wishers, from a subordinate rank among the staff at the playhouse, to which he first attached himself.

There are several domestic and historical melodramas, such as *Arden of Feversham*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Selimus*, the *Spanish Moor's Tragedy*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, and others, perhaps the *Wars of Cyrus* taken from Xenophon, which are anonymous, and which have been thought by the earlier critics to be Shakespear's, because his style was visible, perhaps, here and there; but since there is at present slight room to doubt that the poet was commissioned at an early stage of his London career to read manuscripts, and insert or revise sentences and portions of scenes at his discretion, we cannot have any real difficulty in arriving at a solution of the mystery, and our regret is, that he sometimes exercised his office with too sparing a hand, and left tell-tale blemishes untouched. The group which I have enumerated forms a theatrical or dramatic school, which had a long lease of popularity, and can scarcely yet be said to

have fallen out of public favour. The melodrama, with its sensationalism and sanguinary incident, was an inheritance from the Roman stage, where crime and bloodshed were features rendered familiar and tolerable by national temperament and habit. The comedy of *Mucedorus*, 1598, has been sometimes held to contain a passage interpolated by Shakespear. But in *Titus Andronicus*, as I elsewhere shew, matter offers itself, substantially common to the *First Part of Henry VI.* and the *Sonnets*, and in a third play, which betrays far stronger marks of an editorial hand—that hand Shakespear's—the *Reign of Edward the Third*, published in 1596, a line of Sonnet 94 is incorporated *verbatim*, as if, like Goldsmith, he was addicted to the repetition of a phrase or figure, which had pleased him, and had lingered in his memory, like the "prophetic soul" of the Sonnets reproduced in *Hamlet*. His treatment of such a subject would be strictly in a line with his English historical series, just as *Titus Andronicus*, so far as he is actually responsible for it, may have led the way to the Roman Plays *longo intervallo*. It is by no means clear that the Shakespearean Apocrypha, if we may apply such a term to plays to which he stands only in the relation of editor, might not be sensibly enlarged, for in reading some of the anonymous pieces produced and printed down even to 1600, we can never be sure, that the eye and hand of a master have not been there; and in a drama, for instance, such as *Look about You*, performed by the Lord Admiral's servants before the year just named, there are vestiges of superior manipulation, and in the Earl of Gloucester, a *dramatis persona*, we observe a hint for the cynical and deranged types of character worked out more fully and ably in *Timon* and *Lear*. But even in the *Histories*, incorporated with the acknowledged works, a seam of the more immature style and cast of thought peeps out here and there—an expression or a passage, a perhaps unconscious retention of the old leaven.

In another way the presence of the poet behind the scenes, in the earlier stages of his career at least, must be

allowed to have afforded him an excellent opportunity of hearing what manuscripts were in course of submission or under consideration at the leading theatres; and there is an old note on the title-page of the play of *George A 'Green, the Pinder of Wakefield*, 1599 (but written some years prior), to the effect that it was the work of a minister or clergyman, who took the part of the Pinder himself, "*teste* W. Shakespeare"—that is to say, I conclude, that the author of the memorandum had been so informed by no less a person than the poet. But it is added just below: "Ed. Juby saith that this play was made by Ro. Green." Juby was part-writer of a drama on the subject of Samson, performed in 1602. The fact seems to be that the drama in question was composed by Greene, while he still held the living of Tollesbury in Essex, and that he was the minister, to whom the memorandum points; and it farther shews his theatrical leaning in having taken the leading part in the performance—a circumstance, which was extremely likely to have come to the ears of Shakespear during his earlier career in London.

In the time of Shakespear the absence of any system of copyright outside the rather uncertain official machinery under the control of the Lord Chamberlain, and the want of general publicity, when no newspapers existed, combined to favour a general habit of plagiarism, especially as regarded the use in productions intended for the stage of passages from those intended for the closet and *vice versa*. Borrowers were, broadly speaking, of two orders: those who borrowed and bettered, and those who borrowed, and marred in the appropriation. Nothing more serious than reproof in print attended these operations; and there was a case or so, where even a portrait of one literary gentleman was made to do service for another, who desired to spare himself the trouble and expense of sitting for his own likeness. Our poet certainly, as has been copiously demonstrated, was a prominent disciple of this school, and he can scarcely be said to have drawn any line. For from

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the dramas of others and from their lyrics he drew whatever struck his fancy as apt to dovetail happily into some scene, passage, or sentence in his own; he was of the conveyancers, who did not disimprove what he so honoured; and, the quarry secured, the remainder dropped from his hand, as the mouse's skin does on the grass from the owl in the bough overhead. It was *feuille morte*. His immediate predecessors and contemporaries unconsciously prepared material in book-form or otherwise for one, who almost exclusively read with a single object—the transmutation of what they had written into what he thought that they should, had they been of his turn of mind. Shakespear did not scruple to appropriate material, whether it came to him by word of mouth or from the book of a contemporary. Others acted by him with corresponding freedom, not corresponding success. Plagiarism and misascription were everywhere rife, and seem to have been generally tolerated. Even a man, whose dramatic writings and fame at all events were vital to him in a commercial sense, permitted others to attach his name or his initials to plays with which he had no concern, and made no sign—none perceptible to us. That he disapproved of such practices we augur from his expression to Heywood of annoyance at the piracy of Jaggard in the case of the *Pas-sionate Pilgrim*.

The prevailing impersonality, forestalling the counsel of the French novelist Flaubert to his pupil Maupassant, renders the few salient exceptions the more conspicuous. The lunge at the Puritans may perhaps be paired with that (in the *Merry Wives*) at the then late Sir Thomas Lucy, which is even more direct, being aimed at an individual instead of a sect, and which might better have been left unwritten, inasmuch as in *Henry IV.* his impression of the Knight, while Lucy yet lived, strikes one as by no means unfriendly.

The generalization and neutrality of the dramatist, as distinguished from the sonneteer, are well maintained, how-

ever, although there is in so many places liberty and power to draw conclusions. Of course, when the quest of the Man and his Career in the Writer and his Work is set on foot, there is an inherent drift to fanciful speculation. Of all the wild theories, which have been broached in type, the first place is assuredly due, so far as violent unlikelihood goes, with all our advanced knowledge of dates and facts, to that which makes the poet *and his wife* the originals of Fenton and Anne Page in the *Merry Wives*.

With what feelings such a man must have contemplated the enormous accumulation, even down to his day, of objects in book-form: a deluge of dry goods garnered up in libraries or on bookshelves! He was by no means, one judges, a collector. He utilized, adapted, transformed whatever printed or oral material came to hand, but did not value the sources, where they were books, as possessions, when all the points had been noted. The Harts, who did not become actually extinct till the commencement of the nineteenth century (1806), would have kept at least some of his books. Even if Mrs. Hall did not approve of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*, or, which is quite likely, did not set eyes on them, there was almost beyond doubt a family Bible of the Genevan type,¹ which did its share of service in imparting to the Plays a scriptural flavour *passim*, as the poet turned over the leaves, and took mental notes of passages and phrases which struck him. I single out this probable feature in the home, because it is more than likely that the poet kept any other books, which he might have acquired for use, in London, and of such the ulterior destiny is with two exceptions unknown. The first folio might have lain without offence on an upper shelf at Stratford, if it had been sent as a gift from the publisher to Mistress Shakespeare; but it did not appear till the November of the year (1623), in which she died in the August. But the presumption is, that whatever there may have been in the nature of a book-closet at New Place in 1616, was more or less

¹ This version differs in many places from the authorized one of 1611.

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speedily scattered. The widow of Dr. Hall, in 1648, only offered to shew a visitor the MSS. of her deceased husband.

In a study of the private and literary life of Shakespear so much presents itself, which contradicts ordinary experience, that we almost grow accustomed to an inversion of the biographical annals of less superlatively gifted and less peculiarly minded persons. Shakespear must have held in his hands in the course of his life a very large number of books and pamphlets; but instead of retaining them, he almost undoubtedly cast away volumes or items of every kind, when it had served its purpose, or he saw that it was incapable of serving one. Here he offered a diametrical contrast to the learned Jonson, who formed two successive libraries, and to Burton, who was a bibliomaniac; but Bacon, on the other hand, is not identified with any permanent collection of books. It would be possible, and it might prove interesting, to compile a list of works which there is fairly solid ground for believing that Shakespear had at some time or other under his eyes, and to which he was indebted for an outline, a scene, a hint, a name, or a phrase. Such an inventory would place him in the position of a collector of a new and not the least wise type, and would leave behind it in the distance the so-called *Shakespear's Library*.

As the matter stands, there are only the first edition of Florio's Montaigne and the Latin Ovid of 1502 to stand sponsors for the rest. Among the serious responsibilities of his illiterate surroundings was the discouragement from the formation of a closet of books, no less than the destruction or dispersion of such few as might have insensibly accumulated in town, and (in some cases perhaps) been ultimately transferred by the Halls to the Warwickshire home.

We possess in fee the inheritance, which he has left to us in common with the remainder of humanity, to be a happiness and an instruction to generations yet unborn. It might be ungracious to say that, had the precious gift been less ample, we should not perhaps have been much poorer or less

sensible of the benefit conferred on us for ever ; yet I express at least my own sentiments when I declare that I could have dispensed (save on biographical grounds) with all the lyrics, except the songs interspersed through the plays, and with certain of the plays, if it were not for a few redeeming passages. Nor would the rank of the poet have suffered, had he been known to us only as the writer of a dozen or so of the dramatic series : *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Timon*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, the *Merry Wives*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Tempest*, although how could we spare the Falstaff scenes in *Henry IV.* and *V.*?

The constitutional tendency to the humorous vein is mentioned and illustrated hereafter. But the finest and noblest compositions are the Tragedies, partly because they lend themselves to the higher flights of passion and sensibility ; and Shakespear lived to divert into that channel the whole force of his intellect.

To the Plays, as well as to the Poems, we have to go in quest of elucidations, such as they are, of the poet's family history, his private emotions, and even his public views and political bias. Some passages, indeed, are so obviously autobiographical, that we are spared the pains of reading between the lines or being satisfied with an hypothesis. Nothing could be more natural, where the course of the drama afforded facilities for introducing as a normal human trait or incident something within his own knowledge—even something which had occurred under his own roof.

When we take in our hands the complete dramatic compositions of Shakespear, and peruse them at our leisure, we too rarely pause to reflect on the conditions under which they were originally and severally given, not always even to the press, but to the theatre-going public. We too often fail to appreciate the search for a theme or a story likely to prove popular, the hours of toil and thought, while the selected topic was in hand, the arrangements as to its presentation on the stage, the fixture of the cast, and the

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anxious moments, till the verdict of the audience was delivered.

The originality and individuality of the poet considered, there has perhaps never been in dramatic annals or experience one who less depended on his own unassisted invention, or who to a more complete extent laid under tribute the imperfect, yet suggestive and serviceable, labours of predecessors. Shakespear approached the sphere of literary activity, which he was to make his career, at a juncture when several of his countrymen, whose education and culture might be said to excel his own, who had been bred at universities, and who had profited by foreign travel, were in possession of the stage, and were familiar to the public ear.

Those writers who had anticipated the author in lyrical composition were evidently studied by him, on the identical principle pursued in the plays, and reflect in his pages thoughts and images reproduced with a difference.

It is sufficiently singular that, whereas the poet was long upbraided by critics as illiterate, some of them have now crossed over to the opposite side, and wish us to believe that there was no book, English or foreign, worth reading, which escaped him. The moral, which I presume to draw is, that certain industrious hunters have met with stray passages in works of or before the time of the poet, similar in tenor to passages in his writings, and have conferred a distinction on this author rather than those others. There is a way of looking at this particular aspect of the poet's literary character and methods, which should have struck many students of the subject, and it is the facilities, which he, during his prolonged sojourn in the Borough and Blackfriars, enjoyed of casting his eyes over any new publications, and assimilating serviceable matter; nor should it be forgotten, that the value of the great majority of so-called Shakespeareana lies in its demonstration of the literary stores open to use in the days of the dramatist, and accessible to him in sundry ways, rather than in any proof, which it supplies of his direct personal

inspection of the volumes in their original form and language.

His readiness to convert his predecessors to useful account might be illustrated almost to any extent. He did not scruple to transfer to his own page even the very expression with which he met in the productions of others; and this criticism does not contemplate his scientific revision of older plays so much as his casual loan of details, perhaps in an undramatic work, perhaps even in the Hebrew Scriptures, which fell in his way. I shall give a rather remarkable example of his obligation to a source, at present known only in a fragmentary shape, for the inspiration of a passage in *Hamlet*. In act 2, scene 2, there is the place, where the Prince expatiates on dreams:—

“*Ham.* O God! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a King of infinite space, were it not that I have had dreams.

“*Guil.* Which dreams indeed are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

“*Ham.* A dream itself is but a shadow.”

Long ago, Mr. H. G. Norton of Liverpool reprinted from a fragment of five leaves then in his possession “*The Waking Man’s Dream*,” conjectured by him to be a portion of a reprint of the *Storybook* by Richard Edwards described by Warton the historian as having been seen by him at Chichester in the hands of Collins the poet, probably in 1755, when his brother Joseph and himself went down to see the poet in his last illness. This relic commences with what is called *The Fifth Event* in these terms: “*The Greeke proverbe saith, that a man is but the dreame of a shaddow, or the shaddow of a dreame*”—and so the writer proceeds. But my sole object was to exhibit the precise adoption of the phrase and notion in the cited sentence from the book by the playwright, the common original purporting to be Greek. There is no positive evidence that the fragment belongs to the work by Edwards, except that both contain the plot of the induction of the *Taming of a Shrew*; and

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the Collins book is not at present forthcoming. This sciographical form of conceit was taken up by Daniel in those lines:—

“ Are they shadows that we see,
And can shadows pleasure give?
Pleasures only shadows be,
Cast by bodies we conceive—”

I shall only dwell for a moment on the rather important part which this phase of life and thought plays in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and its convenience for dramatic purposes. It dates back to the Hebrew Scriptures and possibly farther.

The poet had, no doubt, a rather heavy cross to bear from the moment, when he discovered the possession of such high gifts, until he had rendered his position secure, and had established a new era. Not only were the professional jealousy and disparagement to be overcome; but until the greater portion of the reign of Elizabeth had run out, the state of public opinion was adverse to the stage. If the advent of the Stuarts was productive of no other benefit, it arrested the puritanical movement, and yielded infinitely larger scope to the theatrical profession.

In 1592, when Greene denounced him as a poacher on the domain, which he seems to have viewed as the freehold of his immediate set and himself, Shakespear had inferribly raised his reputation as an editor and adapter to a sufficient height to render him an object of antipathy or dislike. We are surely to allow the lapse of half-a-dozen years for such a measure of success on the part of one, who had exchanged his provincial for a London home, with a view to a livelihood, if not something more: a comparative novice, though not, as I think, a friendless stranger. Of his performances as a corrector of other men's manuscripts in the interval we seem to feel that we know something; but I am convinced that we are far from knowing all about his employment between 1587 and 1592 apart from his original lyrical work, some to be shortly before the public, some not yet to see

the light—never to see it for all he cared. A man of his pliant intellect and masterful grasp—a quinquennial term, where a *nucleus* or a skeleton of some sort was forthcoming, was nearly incapable of expiring, before “Johannes Factotum,” as the irate Greene christens him, had a notable record to shew. Since some of the dramatic compositions, First Sketches or otherwise, were tolerably popular, and had lengthened runs, there is slight doubt, that the poet introduced fresh touches now and again at the instance of managers, and had the MS. recopied for use. Greene possibly owed the nickname, which he bestowed on Shakespear, to the passage in Gascoigne’s *Supposes*, 1566, where we fall in with a *Magister Factotum*. To Greene the intrusion of Shakespear—and even of Marlowe—on the scene was apt to be a source of peculiar annoyance and resentment, as he, like Lodge, had begun by producing works, not only of an undramatic, but even of a devotional or moral tenor,¹ succeeded by a brief experiment in medicine; and it was not till a late stage in his not long career, that he proceeded to contribute to the stage, just at the point of time when Shakespear was slowly making a name for himself, and securing commissions from managers; nor is there any doubt that the later comer on the ground was responsible for supplanting Greene and his school, even while he added injury to insult by adopting some of their suggestions.

The author of a tract entitled *Greenes Funeralls*, 1594, evidently a friend of the then deceased dramatist, tries to

¹ There are two or three publications dated between 1581 and 1584 with his name or initials, seeming to point to a temporary, if not original, association with the Church, which he subsequently, it appears, abandoned for the medical profession. On the title of one of his tracts, 1585, he describes himself as Student in Physic. A scholar, a traveller, a graduate of both universities, and a poet of no mean power, this unhappy man ruined his career by his dissolute habits, partly contracted, according to his own admission, at Cambridge, where he received from fellow-students the inducement to go abroad. In the course of his life he played many parts, of which we are perhaps no losers by not knowing more. See MS. Ashmole, 1467, art. 3, 9, 12, &c., for a possible clue to his parentage, and Dyce’s *Greene and Peele*, 1861, p. 58.

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exhibit the reverse of the medal, to turn the tables on Shakespear. He says:—

“Greene is the pleasing Object of an eie;
 Greene please the eies of all that lookt vpon him.
 Greene is the ground of euerie Painters die;
 Greene gaue the ground to all that wrote vpon him.
 Nay more the men that so eclipt his fame,
 Purloynde his Plumes, can they deny the same?”

In the last couplet the plural number is used; but the shaft was levelled at one target—at “the tiger’s heart wrapped in a player’s hide.”

Nearly all Shakespear’s more important productions, it is notable, are developments of other authors’ labours. His brain was an alchemical laboratory, from which poor material emerged so transmuted, that the original writer might have scarcely recognized his offspring, if he had been yet living, and might at the same time have entertained that prejudice against his finisher or rather transformer, of which we hear from Greene. But the advantage, which Shakespear derived from the employment of the labours of his predecessors was even greater than has been generally allowed. To have the essay of another in type or even in writing before one tends to confer on the first text of a revised work the benefit and attributes of a second issue. One detects and amends the faults of some one else instead of one’s own. The possession of a sketch by a writer of so receptive a mind was analogous to that of one by a painter, who outlines roughly on paper what he subsequently elaborates on canvas.

Greene did not hesitate on his part to press into his service the work of others, when he was in search of a topic for a fresh essay; and his *Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, 1592, where he so violently assails the Harveys, is little more than a *rechauffé* of the *Debate between Pride and Lowliness*, printed by Francis Thynne about two decades before, and (as Greene possibly calculated) forgotten. Then it became the turn of Greene to suffer the wrong, which he had so freely inflicted

on others; and in 1615 his *Disputation between a He-Conycatcher and a She-Conycatcher*, 1592, was served up by some one else as a new cate of his own under the title of *Thieves Falling out, True Men come by their Goods*. Even in the theatrical department, Greene had not invariably succeeded in maintaining an immaculate repute; he was constantly in great straits; and he was upbraided by a contemporary for having raised funds in one instance by selling his *Orlando Furioso* twice over. At any rate, he was tolerably vulnerable, if Shakespear had cared to recriminate, which we may rest satisfied that he did not publicly do, much less in print. *Orlando* was acted at the Rose Theatre in 1591, and Shakespear may have very well seen it performed, or have glanced at the printed copy of 1594, for he has borrowed a little from it, and, had the author been living, might have incurred some additional reproof on this account.

Shakespear found himself mainly befriended by two distinct classes of germ or prototype, the actual drama and the story awaiting dramatization. To the former category his earlier labours were exclusively confined; it was easier to deal with a ready-made piece, than to transform a narrative written for the closet into one suitable for the stage; and it is a tolerably secure hypothesis that in the treatment of First Sketches from other pens the matter derived from the Chronicles and other elaborate works was, to a large extent, the fruit of original research and adaptation by the first author and not by Shakespear, who was more bent on the reception of his work by audiences than on verifying history. He so far paid homage to his predecessors—to those who had had their work exhibited on the stage in its unrevised shape, and to those who brought or sent MSS. to the theatre on approval. Much more of other playwrights' work than we are ever likely to know enjoyed the advantage of his castigation; but in the later and maturer period the rough copy, whether reduced to theatrical shape or not, whether such a production as the old *Hamlet* or as Greene's *Pandosto*, emerged from the crucible refined and spiritualized

beyond identification. But outside this range fell such probably quite exceptional cases as that of Jonson's *Every Man in his Humor*,¹ of which the eventual acceptance by the Lord Chamberlain's Company in 1598 is usually ascribed to the friendly offices of Shakespear.

The method of Shakespear seems to have been to procure or adopt a groundwork in print or manuscript, to accumulate suggestions from conversation or hearsay, and to rely for the rest on his own vast and fertile fancy. His aggregate indebtedness to the entire corpus of raw material assembled together in *Shakespear's Library* was assuredly very insignificant. Yet some of these supposed originals were his sole resource, so far as book-learning went. I apprehend that the poet resorted to manuscripts sparingly, unless they were acting copies of other men's plays submitted for his revision.

The reputed solecisms in historical, geographical, and other directions, to whatever they may amount, are largely susceptible of being explained by the nature of his leading aims, which were truth to nature and accuracy of delineation. He had ever before his eyes the sovereign need of fulfilling theatrical requirements and impressing the popular fancy; and these objects he assuredly attained, when through a succession of years in so consummate a degree he appealed to every phase of human sensibility—to our everlasting sense of humour, of beauty, of terror, of pathos. Names of persons and places were subordinate to the plot and the dialogue, of both of which we are able to perceive the progressive refinement and intellectual subtlety—features so surprisingly and provokingly absent even in his most eminent contemporaries, Jonson inclusive.

This profound and happy intuition, on which rests, perhaps more than on anything else, his fame to-day, and of which there are glimpses even in his earliest work, stands alone; and it is conceivable that it was sparingly

¹ This had been a popular phrase since Tarlton's time. See *Old English Jest-Books*, 1864, ii. 250.

appreciated by contemporaries. Near the opening of the *Merchant of Venice* there is the passage :—

“ *Salarino* . . . I should not see the sandy hour-glass run,
But I should think of shallows and of flats ;
And see my wealthy *Andrew* dock'd in sand,
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs,
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church,
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks
Which, touching my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream ;
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks—”

This sort of inner sense an Elizabethan audience might have scarcely caught ; and such treatment is common. Some may remember the passage, where he says, “ Hell is empty ; all the devils are here,” and that in *Hamlet*, v. 1, where the Prince says, referring to himself and Ophelia :—

“ Let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart—”

It is plain that Shakespear had a kindness for this class of imagery, and we see with what a master's hand he drew it. This is the respect, in which Tennyson (and perhaps to a limited extent Lovell Beddoes¹) among the moderns most resemble him. Let me draw farther attention to an exquisite passage in *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2, where the Egyptian queen describes her Roman lover. There is no finer passage even in Shakespear :—

“ *Cleo.* I dreamt there was an emperor Antony,
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man !
Dol. I understand not, madam.
Cleo. His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted
The little O, the earth —”

¹ Beddoes, however, is too apt, even in his best work, to impart to his niceties of sentiment the air of forced conceits.

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And so the queen proceeds, surfeiting the contemporary audience—and us—with tragic pathos, which the poet brings in the Clown to relieve for a few moments as a preparation for the sublime catastrophe.

Again, in that fascinating song in *Measure for Measure*, of which the authorship is treated as doubtful, as it originally appeared in Robert Jones's *First Book of Airs*, 1600, but which must strike any one as almost unquestionably from Shakespear's pen, there is that pair of phrases: "break of day" and "lights that do mislead the morn," applied to a woman's eyes. These esoteric subtleties began before the poet entered on his career, and belong, more or less, to all literatures; but no writer of any nation ever handled them as Shakespear has done. They are richly interspersed in the more philosophical productions or passages.

This covetable quality and gift are conspicuously deficient in all the other writers, not only of his own, but of earlier and later times. One may wade through the entire body of English dramatic literature in the vain search for anything of the kind, and a single passage of Shakespear often outweighs in value and beauty a whole volume of dramas from another pen.

The surviving proportion of the manuscript dramas offered to the theatres during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods has been represented as so low as one in fifty. But these pieces were brought or sent in many cases by strangers and outsiders, and were first and perhaps only attempts in this class of composition; yet there is evidence that plays written by such experienced hands as Peele and Greene have been lost. Shakespear, however, was so far happily situated in the present respect, that his early acquisition of a vested interest in the theatre and company, with which he associated himself, secured him a control over his papers and copy; and there is little or no ground for the apprehension, that, whatever may be the case with mere slight *rifacimenti* of other men's work, any production with a distinct claim to his main authorship has failed to descend to us.

The loss of contributions or offerings to the theatres in London, however great it may have been, was probably insignificant in comparison with that, which we have sustained from the destruction of dramatic literature once extant in Greece and Rome, if any conclusion is to be drawn from the references and extracts in such works as the *Deipnosophistæ* of Athenæus and the *Bibliotheca* of Photius.

The curious diversity of more or less casual suggestions in the Plays and Poems assists in encouraging us to lean to the idea, that Shakespear was more prone to the appropriation of detached incidents and expressions, which he very probably in some cases husbanded against an opportunity for use, than to complete dependence on any given original; which goes some distance toward repeating, that *Shakespear's Library* is a far less considerable creditor than it is generally reputed to have been. In fact, there were cases, where a simple phrase on a title-page was sufficient to develope a train of thought. Take the somewhat famous passage, where Gonzalo in the *Tempest* is the mouthpiece for a declaration of heterodox views on government. The main notion is from the Essay of Montaigne *On Cannibals*; but the English writer almost seems to have had before him a volume, now very rare, called *The Defence of Contraries*, translated from the French by a fellow-playwright, Anthony Munday. Perhaps he did no more than carry away the terms of the title-page; and a second case occurs in *Cymbeline*, where the author perhaps recollected the passage in the *Squire of Low Degree*, in making Imogen mistake the headless body of Cloten for that of her lord. In the *Second Part of Henry IV.*, i. 3, where Falstaff is speaking of apoplexy, he tells the Chief Justice, that he "has read the cause of his effects in Galen." There is evidence that Gale's *Certain Works of Chirurgery*, translated from Galen, was in Stratford (perhaps in the hands of Dr. Hall) in 1604, and was cited in a suit brought by the poet against Philip Rogers. But the probability is, that the name of Galen was more generally familiar, since I do not recollect that in

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Gale's translation of some of his productions he had anything specifically bearing on the complaint. Shakespear doubtless used Galen in a typical or representative sense.¹

Quite a small library of translations and compilations accumulated in our country during the life of the poet, and while we may regard such books with comparative distrust and indifference, they strike one as just the handy material, from which Shakespear may have been content to furnish himself with particulars on various branches of knowledge and learning without an undue demand on his patience or time. In common with more ordinary persons, the poet carried down with him from his school-days at home many useful hints and cues. We find among the names of the masters at the local school, while he was yet at Stratford, though no longer a pupil, that of Jenkins, from whose lips he might have derived some of the Welsh idioms of his Hugh Evans; but there were many Welsh settlers in the borough at that period.

From his dependence on suggestion, and on a quick study of salient features rather than on the exhaustive perusal or mastery of a volume, he may well have regarded with more tolerant eyes than ourselves much of the rather dull and poor literary material in the department of fiction, produced by the age just preceding his own and by his contemporaries; but I picture him to myself skipping a great deal, and mentally storing only those passages or points which he judged to be dramatically manageable. His vision glanced from the printed book before him to the stage and the theatrical company, on which the mere literary treatment was bound to wait. Passages, which might tell in the prose or even lyrical form, were frequently unadapted for the boards; and it amounts to this, that the poet held a confer-

¹ The works of this noted man were much studied in England during the Elizabethan era, and in Scotland. Archbishop Cranmer had an edition in six folio volumes, as well as one of the separate treatises formerly the property of Darnley's mother. Collections of books in older times were more miscellaneous and fortuitous, and Shakespear was by no means alone or peculiar in his casual gleaning habit.

ence with someone else through his published work, just as he would have done by word of mouth; he took from his text just as much as suited him, or as little, as he would have taken in the course of conversation.

The array of books of reference is of course not without its fanciful and forsooth its commercial element, as there is a powerful inducement to bring within the range of Shakespeareana items, which have otherwise slight pretensions to notice and value. It is a pity that the pecuniary motive should have tended to set back to so considerable an extent the limits of the reading and toll of the poet; and some of the authorities or sources quoted are purely ridiculous. In the *Merchant of Venice* he quotes Scylla and Charybdis, and straightway Philippe Gaultier of Lille's *Alexandreis* is added to the Shakespearean book-closet or shelf. This sort of thing is childish and preposterous. The saying was of course a proverb three or four centuries ago—more so, in fact, than it at present is. I apprehend that it is necessary to reject all the hypotheses as to his *direct* debt to foreign analogues beyond a collection of their general tenor from others and the possession by such means of sufficient suggestion for his purpose; but, on the contrary, one conceives him likely to have welcomed and attentively studied such comprehensive miscellanies as the *Mirror for Magistrates*, the *Palace of Pleasure*, Fenton's *Tragical Discourses*, Twyne's *Pattern of Painful Adventures*, and Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*; but Holinshed's *Chronicle*, of which a new edition appeared in 1586, just when Shakespeare first arrived in London on the business of life, Fox's *Martyrs*, North's *Plutarch*, Hakluyt's *Voyages*, and perhaps the English Froissart for *Henry V.*, were bulkier undertakings, which he could hardly afford to ignore or neglect; the Holinshed for the English historical series and the Plutarch for the Roman plays. There were many other publications of the day, which he laid under tribute for incidental expressions or images; for example, Golding's, Turbervile's, and even Marlowe's, Ovid, and the English version of the *World of Wonders* by Henri Etienne,

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to the latter of which Mr. Caldecott attached no slight importance.¹ So far as the English Ovids are concerned, their claim to a place among Shakespearean aids may certainly be thought to be shared by the original Latin text of the *Metamorphoses* almost unquestionably acquired by the poet at an early date, and not much less available for the limited purposes to which he applied such aids. Two primers, the *Sententie Pueriles*, mentioned by Lyly the Euphuist in his *Pappe with a Hatchet*, and Lily's *Accidence* are cited as having fallen under his notice, the normal *A.B.C.*, which passed through a greater number of editions than we have on record, was in universal acceptance and use; and he expressly quotes the Mantuan Eclogues of Battista Spagnuoli, of which there were English renderings from 1567 to 1594; but any way he merely dipped into the volume cursorily and places in the mouth of Holofernes a line from one of these pastorals, then so popular as to be read in schools. Keeping before our eyes the fact that the seminary at Stratford held a high rank among the educational institutions of its class, it is improper to deny to Shakespear, above all, the credit of being sufficiently conversant with these elementary manuals to select what suited him; and in fact it was his special aim to take cognizance of such popular works rather than of advanced treatises.

The utilization of the accessible body of materials and authorities by Shakespear and his fellow-playwrights was not only natural, but peremptory: there was not till centuries later any critical school of history or biography. Audiences and readers alike relied on such books as there were for all the knowledge which they possessed, and in the production on the boards of pieces founded on favourite and familiar writers even the more scholarly spectator was able

¹ See Hunter's *New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, l. 322, for an account of the visit of this distinguished foreigner to London. He was of course only one of thousands, who came over here both prior to the Shakespearean era, and while the poet enjoyed opportunities of meeting or hearing of them.

to relish the dexterous seizure and presentment of the salient points in some famous story which he had already learned at college or at home. Had a truer version of it been put before him, he might have liked it less well.

In some unexplored recess, an addition to our positive acquaintance with the bookish appurtenances of the poet may come to light. If we were to compute the importance of such a discovery by the obligation incurred, we should most cordially welcome a Holinshed or a Plutarch—more particularly, if, in addition to his autograph, it should possess marginalia or even underscorings.

Whether the debt of the poet to such dry productions as Greene's *Pandosto* and Lodge's *Rosalynd*, was great or slender, their popular acceptance in the closet or study must have been immeasurably greater than that of his plays in book-form, many of which did not reach a second edition, while of the others there was no printed text in his lifetime. The public resorted to the theatre to witness their performance on the stage, for beyond the mere dialogue and plot there were all those adventitious accessories, which have always rendered the playhouse attractive to thousands, who do not read plays; and here lies, perhaps, the solution of the mystery surrounding the unquestionable rarity of the early quartos, which served for the immediate reference of those, who contemplated a visit to the place of representation, or desired to refresh their memories at home, rather than as literary productions deserving of shelf-room.

Perhaps of all the sources of inspiration that which not only equals, but surpasses the dramatic analogue in merit is the *Pattern of Painful Adventures*, by Laurence Twyne, which is even now far more readable than *Rosalynd* or *Pandosto*, or than the play of *Pericles* more or less based upon it, and which is Shakespear's in very partial measure. The novel is characterized by that modern tone, which distinguishes all literary work of the higher class.

In the writer's *Shakespear's Library*, 1875, he has shown reason for ascribing to the dramatist in his Italian scenes

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a recourse to Thomas's *History of Italy*, 1549, from the pen of a resident at Venice and a personal observer, Fenton's *Guicciardini*, 1579, of which both Barnabe Barnes (in his *Devil's Charter*, 1607) and Massinger made use, and Harrington's *Ariosto*, 1591, as well as to the *Palace of Pleasure* above named. The *Ariosto* was printed by the poet's countryman, Richard Field, and is on that account more likely to have been in his hands soon after its issue, as Field and he at that date were on friendly terms.

Quick and easy study was, no doubt, agreeable to the poet, especially where it was so often a mere case of seizing a few clues or situations and a name or so. The old *Lear* had been performed at the Rose theatre in April, 1593; and Shakespear might have been present to take notes. In Richard Harvey's *Philadelphus*, 1593, the King and his three daughters are incidentally introduced, and there we meet with the name *Cordelia*; but the character might have been prompted by the Antigone in the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides, exhibited at Gray's Inn in 1566, but accessible to Shakespear in the printed works of Gascoigne. All such hints were useful, but not vital; they served as a groundwork without much help from historians, who were not calculated to transform it into what we have the privilege of possessing. Such a cursory survey of possible material or suggestion, looking at the vast and incessant output of printed paper, must have sufficed to inspire Shakespear with a lively sense of the valuelessness of much that he handled and cast away, and a disposition to forestall Tennyson in his stigma of "miserable books."

The volume of material, of which we have the nett matured essence in the Plays, falls under two distinct and almost independent categories: that which he derived from more or less attentive perusal of books and pamphlets within his reach, and that which came to him by word of mouth from associates more familiar than himself with certain subjects and certain localities. The measure of obligation was as unequal as the source of it was various. In several

instances, whatever estimate may be formed of such dramas anterior to his own on the same theme as have actually come down to us, the foundation-play was beyond question of immense service; for it supplied the general plot, and left to Shakespear just that function, where he was supreme, the task of introducing happy and masterly touches, of modifying the *dramatis personæ*, and even of changing the consummation.

Shakespear presented himself on the scene at an epoch when our national literature had been vastly enriched not merely by original compositions of a dramatic texture, but by an infinite diversity of works shedding a new light on foreign manners and ancient history; and among his personal friends in different degrees of intimacy were men, who had spent years in travel and adventure abroad, either on the Continent or in more remote regions, and from whose casual discourse innumerable hints were readily to be gleaned, even where the speakers had not committed their experiences to print.

Shakespear stood alone, in a sense and a way which have not been, I apprehend, sufficiently emphasized, if indeed even noticed, by his biographers and critics. While he was almost undoubtedly concerned in the editorship of a larger number of dramatic compositions than can be authoritatively attributed to him, we must see, arguing from those cases, where the evidence of his revising hand is more or less before us, that he differed from his professional contemporaries in refraining from collaboration with them, and so long as he continued to play the part of an adapter, limited himself to the improvement, as he judged it to be, of the work of others. The hostility of Greene and his friends might have been disarmed, if the young provincial intruder had offered to join their ranks, and strengthen their position. But he elected to act differently.

Then as now there was a firm literary ring, from which Shakespear held himself aloof. He treated the satirical or abusive reflections upon him with a dignified and consistent

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restraint; his detractors and he have changed places; he has come into his own; and they are no more than the flies tickling the lion's nose. Had he been a *cleverer* man, his history would have perhaps been less obscure. His friends might have told us more about him, and he might have told us more himself.

CHAPTER XVII

Self-culture—Value and influence of verbal communication—Rabelais—An ostensible source of error—Giulio Romano—Characters and incidents drawn from life—Falstaff and the buck-basket—Vindication of the poet from illiteracy and ignorance—The censure of Jonson—Superiority of Shakespear in a knowledge of his art—Curious slips in the Plays—Their prevailing character historical—Deliberate disregard of the Unities—The Tablets in *Hamlet*.

THE opportunities of Shakespear for self-culture, subsequently to his attainment of manhood, regarding his peculiar aptitude for assimilation, have been unquestionably underrated, and the prevailing tendency has been to treat the Works as a prodigy emanating from an untaught genius. The world's greatest heroes and ornaments have been of such a cast, men of such beginnings, no heavier debtors to schools, seminaries and universities, but who have more wealthily profited by the learning and experience of others than those who frequented them. Our national poet, in the first place, quitted home, as it is taken, in 1586-7, fairly grounded in one of the most celebrated chartered provincial grammar schools—that of his native town¹—as Marlowe had been at Canterbury, richly stocked with all the knowledge of nature and human nature, which the country was capable of yielding, with a fair insight into legal details and terms, from the paternal necessity or humour for litigation, and an at least superficial acquaintance with theatrical matters derived from the companies, which periodically visited Stratford and neighbouring places within reach. It has been rather inconsiderately contended by some that he was a lawyer, because he has introduced many legal expressions into his plays and even his poems, and by others, that if it were not so, he had a

¹ The original charter is deposited in the Birthplace Museum.

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lawyer at his elbow. But, in the first place, other dramatists of or about the time, who have been signalized neither as lawyers nor lawyers' acquaintances, displayed precisely the same taste and ability in such a direction, and, again, the more intimate and regular relations between Shakespear and his kinsman Greene belonged, so far as we can discover, to a late period in the poet's dramatic career, when in fact nearly all the plays had been written and presented. For help in difficulties, where French was in question the Quineys and the Combes were at hand, if he happened to be at home, and the *Essays* of Montaigne had been six years before the world in the original language, when he settled in London. Moreover, the instinctive and hereditary rural grasp of elementary law and legal diction has always been in advance of that of the dwellers in great centres, and in the days of the poet, in common with many of his dramatic contemporaries, a country-bred man, this was in a far larger degree so from the dearth of technical books and the still prevailing illiteracy. The talk in the taproom or parlour of the village ale-house formed the unofficial *bureau*, where local and current questions of right were discussed by the elders of the hamlet.

His evident advantage from the friendship of the Burbages, of whom Richard was somewhere about his own age and in 1586 quite a beginner like himself, answers for his unusual rapidity in gaining a footing among the actors and those persons of quality or men of letters, who frequented the successive theatres in Shoreditch and the Borough; and the latter—the unprofessional section—were possessors by training or practical experience of the most widely varied knowledge—able to impart to Shakespear the points of learning, in which he might be deficient, and which no one was better qualified to turn to account. These facilities formed an education more fruitful than book-lore and academical courses. Like Hobbes of Malmesbury, the poet set little by reading, but on different grounds. He preferred to go to the sources himself, whence the literature

came; he studied humanity, as he had begun by studying nature, from life; and even the more scholarly Jonson found it necessary to do the same thing in certain cases in order to eke out the shortcomings, if not to temper the gravity, of his classical creations. Our poet was a better observer than student, and he may be judged to have preferred to rely on oral channels.

The taste for continental and even more distant excursions had been created and fostered, just about the time when Shakespear began to seek material for his work, by the widely and rapidly diffused spirit of maritime adventure and discovery. We hear, independently of practical explorers like Raleigh, of such men as Thomas Lodge, Bartholomew Young, Lewes Lewkenor,¹ Robert Tofte, John Dowland, and Nicholas Breton, all more or less well-known names, acquiring in the Elizabethan period a familiarity with foreign travel, and visiting France, Spain, Italy, and even Denmark; and Spenser, we now know, contemplated about 1576 a tour on the Continent, and collected some of the books likely to serve him as guides.

In 1597 Dowland published his *First Book of Aires*, and in a preface recorded his experience as a traveller; on the title-page he describes himself as a Lutenist; and in 1600 we find him installed at Elsinore as Lutenist to the King of Denmark, which are circumstances to be admitted as evidence of the probabilities of such a man as our poet learning all that he required without pressing with his own feet any foreign ground. Lodge made voyages with Captain Clark in 1588 and with Cavendish in 1592. His *Margarite of America* was penned in the Straits of Magellan.

On the other hand, numberless were the persons of all European nationalities, who came to London, and with whom it is not particularly fanciful to suppose that Shakespear may have exchanged ideas. Of the four men of letters above specified, Lodge produced, as we all know, the foundation-novel of *As You Like It*, while Young

¹ See Kohn's *Shakespeare in Germany*, 1865, p. xix.

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translated the *Diana* of Montemayor, where there is a hint of a passage in the *Winter's Tale*; the version was partly finished in 1583, but not printed till 1598. When one turns over the pages of a volume such as the translation by Lewes, afterward Sir Lewes, Lewkenor of the *Spanish Mandevile of Miracles* of Torquemada, printed in 1600, one perceives one of the collateral helps, which served our dramatist somewhat in the same way and degree as equally trivial indications have served other original creators. Sir Lewes, as Master of the Ceremonies, had excellent opportunities of seeing all the distinguished foreigners, who came to the English court, as part of his business was to arrange their reception at the port of entry, and provide the means of conveyance by road to London. This fact is illustrated by an original bill of charges of 1609. Another member of the Lewkenor family had in fact brought out in 1600 a sufficiently dull and jejune volume appealing to such as wished to form an idea of foreign countries without actually visiting them, from which Shakespear would have benefited less than from half-an-hour's talk with a practical traveller. Breton cynically remarked that those, who lived always at home, saw nothing but home. Yet he failed to enrich us in his books as the result of his own experience, even if he has by chance enriched Shakespear, who evinced his perfect appreciation of sympathy beyond a man's own country in that sentence: "Prythee think there's livers out of Britain."

A remark in a book, as in conversation, has often proved capable at the hands of a man of genius of an indirect or ulterior bearing unimaginable by the writer or speaker. No doubt, Raleigh and Shakespear met, and found each other mutually interesting. They were fellow-contributors to *England's Helicon*, 1600, and possibly Raleigh could have told us if the poet had really any share in the production of the volume.

Summing up the possibilities and more in the way of external aids to such learning as might have been beyond

his personal reach, the information at our command tends to justify the opinion; that there was a surfeit, rather than a deficiency, of stores in nearly every direction; and the dramatic series may be securely regarded as the fruit of the direct intercourse of the poet with men and women of all ranks and conditions in town and country, supplemented by a moderate amount of desultory reading, which rapid study turned to usurious profit. The manifold range of the stores known as Shakespeareana demonstrates the wide variety of form, which an idea may assume, or to which it may be converted. The romancist, the emblem-engraver, the satirist, the traveller, the professional man, the character-painter, the country clown, the fellow-playwright, are only some of the benefactors, whom Shakespear beheld round him, and who served him, some by supplying him with the means of improving on them, some with the opportunity of proving, how difficult it was really to excel.

The diffusion of a limited acquaintance with the English drama in the Low Countries and Germany, through the visits of travellers and men of business, at least from Tudor times, and through the performance of plays by our theatrical companies abroad, more particularly when our political interests were enlisted in the wars and dynastic struggles of the seventeenth century, favoured the study of our dramatic literature by Dutch and German scholars, and led in several cases to the adaptation to Continental stages and other purposes of pieces of which the originals have perished, or are no longer known in their primary form. Instances are recorded where natives of the Fatherland took back home with them books and tracts, which are yet on the shelves of public libraries abroad, and have even lived to acquire the reputation of uniqueness.¹ So far as Shakespear is con-

¹ Did Prince Otto of Hesse obtain, when he was in London in 1611, that copy of Marlowe's *Edward II.*, 1594, now preserved at Cassel? A similar instance is known of the copy of the *Patterne of painefull Adventures*, now at Zurich, which was bought by another German visitor to the English metropolis about 1616.

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cerned, this aspect of the question is mainly confined to a German version of portions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a Dutch one of Martin Slaughter's lost work, *Alexander and Lodwick*, which exhibits points of resemblance to the *Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles*, the former comprised among the collective poetical works of Andreas Gryphius, published at Leipsic in 1661-3, the latter separately printed at Amsterdam in 1618. The Gryphius volume also includes the play of *Cardenio*, licensed for the press in 1653 as the work of Fletcher and Shakespear, and usually identified with the production entitled *Love's Pilgrimage*, in which Fletcher, Jonson, and Massinger are supposed to have had successive hands. In Gryphius it is called *Cardenio und Celinde, Oder Unglücklich Berlübete*. The link between ourselves and the Continent as regards translations or paraphrases into English has been more completely traced than the foreign loans from ourselves, as relations with other countries became more intimate. But this part and aspect of the subject have been sufficiently treated in readily accessible books. So far as the early German stage is concerned, it truly seems to have owed more to us than we to it. The obligation of our own writers to conversational intelligence is in exact keeping with that of the ancients, who similarly turned travellers to account, and to those who did not travel or write, they formed sources of culture. In the nautical terminology and costume belonging to certain parts of the *Tempest* I am inclined to trace visits to the waterside below-bridge, where seafarers might always be overheard or spoken with—a region within easy walk of Blackfriars, and which even to-day scarcely any man in quest of illustrations of life and character neglects to study at some time or other; and long before the drama just named was even contemplated, the poet had visited the Kentish coast, and had possibly beheld a shipwreck with his own eyes. But the "ballad in print," which he seems to say that he so loved, did not yield in his time, so far as I know, any seafarers' argot.

The most signal example of the loan of a plot from a

foreign production, which has never been translated into our language, presents itself in *Twelfth Night*, where we meet with the same story as in the once and long popular Italian work called the *Intronati*, of which, originally published in or before 1537, there was an impression in 1585, a date suggestive of the purchase by some Englishman abroad, through whom Shakespear obtained particulars of the contents. Hunter¹ has gone into this matter rather fully; and I see nothing to add to his account or view. But with *Gl'Inganni*, or rather *Ingannati*, it so far stands differently, in that John Manningham of the Middle Temple, and of the Manninghams of Kent, in his account of the performance of *Twelfth Night* in the Hall of the Inn in 1601-2, expressly notifies his acquaintance with the Italian piece, as if it was one familiar at all events to persons interested in dramatic literature, and if to the diarist, why not the more so to the author of *Twelfth Night*, whether the latter was able absolutely to master the original text or otherwise; for Manningham furnishes an abstract or outline. He describes it as much like the *Comedy of Errors*. We are unfortunately in the dark as to the precise circumstances; but I hazard the notion, that Manningham, if he was conversant with the *Ingannati*, and even possessed a copy, imparted the suggestion of treating the subject to Shakespear, when the plan for a theatrical performance at the Middle Temple was before the Inn. It is much more than possible, that, as Manningham belonged to that Kentish coterie, which included so many of the best families in the county, Marlowe's friends the literary Walsinghams among them, it was not the first meeting of the diarist and the poet.

The theory that Shakespear, where he refers to the advantages and even necessity of foreign travel, is reflecting personal experiences, and has committed to paper the nett fruit of his continental tours as a member of a company of players, demands in my opinion more direct proof than we

¹ *New Illustrations*, i. 391 et seqq.

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at present possess or are likely to gain. From the appearance in so early a drama as the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* of the mind and feeling of the writer on this subject we are the more warranted in concluding that here as everywhere else the voice made audible to us through the centuries is that of one whose mission or rôle was to bring all our race into his service as spokesmen, and that in this particular case hearsay has been transmuted into the semblance of actual practice.

The resources at Shakespear's disposal, where he thought fit to appeal for verifications or other aid in the treatment of foreign localities, persons, fashions, and languages, were, in fact, not only numerous and diversified, but more extensive than we have, or are likely to acquire any means of ascertaining. From perfectly fortuitous circumstances, incidents and expressions have been traced to the most obscure and trivial origin, demonstrating that it was part of the great writer's plan to make his brain a receptacle for every imaginable item which caught his eye or his ear at home and in London. What was taken to be a signal illustration of this ubiquity was the discovery in the borough records of Stratford of the word *aroint*, which occurs both in *Macbeth* and *Lear* and there only, dramas composed at the precise period (1608), when Shakespear was involved in the Addenbroke suit, and when he may have accompanied Greene the lawyer to examine certain municipal papers. But there is a proverb: "Rynt you witch, quoth Bessie Lockit to her mother," where the form *rynt* strikes one as more provincial than *aroint*, and may excellently well have come to the poet's ears in conversation. There is the slightest possible likelihood that he had seen the ancient drawing by Michael Burghers. But there is a second respect, in which his grasp and storage are even more surprisingly shown, and it is in the numerous instances in which he has profited by a perusal of the Genevan Bible.

Perhaps he knew little more of the sea-card mentioned in *Macbeth* than he may have casually gleaned from Hood's

Mariner's Guide, 1596. The sentiment and diction of common life remain substantially the same from age to age. Shakespear wrote:—

“There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will—”

and not so long since an old Yorkshire labourer, cutting some pegs for skewers at the roadside, explained that he had bought them “rough hewn,” and was “shaping their ends.” The poet may have met or seen such another performing an identical operation.

The poet passed through two successive stages of instruction: the first during his school-days and rural career prior to 1586, while he was mentally assimilating all the folklore of his own and the contiguous shires, and serving an apprenticeship to the drama by bearing a part in local theatricals conducted by countrymen, who only saw in him one of themselves; the second and final stage, when he removed to London, practically as a permanence, and in like manner and in a greatly augmented measure turned to lucrative account his observance and receptivity. Nothing was too trivial for him, nothing too subtle, nothing too comprehensive.

The means at hand for deciphering the sense of a passage or allusion in a French, Italian, or classical work were ever considerable, since the influx of foreigners into England on educational missions commenced long before the time of the poet; and where these scholars came in immediate contact with him, nothing could be more natural than that he should seek their incidental aid, or that they should communicate to him details, which might strike them as serviceable. They were in fact the media, through which in many other directions lack of personal knowledge was necessarily supplied by translators, interpreters, and secretaries. It is obvious that, before a man really started on a large undertaking, he would make the book a topic of conversation, and

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even place portions of it in MS. in the hands of those, whom he happened to know.¹

The numerous quotations in Latin, Italian, French, and even Spanish, which are interspersed in the plays, and indeed sometimes with scanty propriety, only create surprize in the minds of those, who underestimate the poet's opportunities of mastering popular or favourite sayings, and procuring a friend to overlook any passage of a more elaborate kind in a foreign language as in *Henry V.*, or who, passing from one extreme to the other, forget how such a man, whatever his deficiencies may have been at the outset, had ample time during his prolonged sojourn in London among scholars, travellers, and linguists, to supply all that he originally lacked. The poet throughout his career and in one sense (unconsciously, as it were) long after played two parts, from which he solemnly dissuaded us—those of a borrower and a lender.

We put a play, as it has come to us from the pen of this artist side by side with the material, out of which he partly at least constructed it; and we are surprized at the contrast between the one and the other. Much of the difference and disparity are of course ascribable to the superior skill of Shakespear and to his nearly uniform practice of refusing to copy what was before him in a servile spirit; but much, again, has to be credited to the reduction of printed prototypes to the dramatic form, where there existed peculiar facilities for selection and modification. Thus our poet enjoyed, his marvellous faculties always granted, two distinct points of vantage: the antecedent play, which yielded at any rate a basis, and the prose or metrical story, which he was at liberty to use at his discretion. Many ground-works, themselves in their entirety impracticable, had left the press, and were ready to hand, when he began to write. It therefore follows that, when the dramatist started on his

¹ So we find Cotgrave the lexicographer communicating in an extant letter of 1610, which I printed for the first time, with some one deemed likely to be of service to him in his forthcoming book.

career, the circumstances were more favourable in respect to *prima stamina* than they had ever been before. I have no doubt whatever that, where in lists of *Shakespeareana* certain monographs incorporated in their books by Holinshed, Fox, and Stow, are claimed as part of the poet's library, the true fact is, that he used the material, where it happened to occur, and if he employs the very expressions found in the originals, it is because they were transferred bodily to the larger books, and he did not think fit to vary the language.

In the almost daily publication of news-sheets and pamphlets relative to foreign affairs on the one hand, and, on the other, in the continual chances of encountering in London persons who had returned from the Continent and America, full of novel and startling intelligence, the dramatist found abundant channels for learning what was going on everywhere; and the incessant output of popular ephemerides, including those "ballads in print, which I love even too well," proved helpful in their way. Shakespear, in his absorption of every scrap calculated to fall into its place, is amusingly illustrated by his introduction into a dialogue of the stereotyped terms of an Elizabethan imprint: *Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum*, and, in another way, by his pressure into service, as a comparison, of "the face of an old Roman coin."

Shakespear's Library may be more accurately pronounced to offer samples of the stores, which were at the writer's command; and much of them were rather the harvest of actual observation. Before he quitted school, there was an actual surfeit of advanced books of instruction or reference even outside those of a strictly historical complexion. For the market began about 1560 to swarm with an endless assortment of manuals directly calculated for the use of teachers of languages and their pupils, travellers, and continental visitors, but from Shakespear's point of view full of suggestions for dialogue and character, and likelier to have been used by him than more elaborate undertakings, such as the *Civil Conversation* of Guazzo, on which rather too strong stress has

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of late been laid by an amateur. This family of literary aids the present writer has elsewhere¹ rather fully described and exemplified; with the compilers it is not extravagant to suppose a personal intimacy on the part of the poet.

Douce² long since entertained the view, more immediately in regard to the *Tempest*, that ordinary intercourse might have furnished, or at least suggested, some particulars, that are not to be found in any of the printed accounts. The familiarity of the dramatist, through a conversational medium, with certain subjects and authors, not available in an English dress, may or may not apply to Rabelais, who occurs in *As You Like It*, either pursuant to more or less appreciative comments on him and his notable work in London literary circles, or to a lost English version. Gargantua is introduced into a prose history of Tom Thumb, 1621.

There appears to have been, both at home and abroad, an usage much more in vogue than at present, of booksellers' shops being made the rendezvous of authors and a lounge, where a man might glance at a volume observed by himself or brought under his notice by a friend, and the reference library of Shakespear was, I surmise, to a large extent of such a nature. There is an anecdote in print of a meeting between the Earl of Southampton and the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, when the former called at a shop in Oxford to ask for Burton's work on its first appearance. The Earl of the tradition might have been the peer associated with Shakespear or his successor, who came into the title in 1625, or one might have mused, whether in later life the former contracted a taste for soberer reading than *Venus and Adonis* or Nash's *Choice of Valentines*.

Instances occurred, where verbal communications mis-carried in the sense, that Shakespear, to whose ears so many different and conflicting items of news and knowledge were constantly coming, could not invariably retain the precise

¹ *Schools, Schoolbooks, and Schoolmasters*, 1888.

² *Illustrations of Shakespear*, 1807, i. p. 5.

facts, or was the recipient of an incorrect account. Reference has been incidentally made to the enthusiastic notice of Giulio Romano, painter, architect, and engineer, in the *Winter's Tale*. He is described in the play as a sculptor, and the scene is laid in Sicily. Romano was not a sculptor, and was wholly unconnected with that island; but he lived till 1546, and there may have been a tradition in Shakespear's time that this "rare Italian master" was a very expert hand at portraiture, which was true enough; but the statue of Paulina's mother was almost assuredly not from his hand. Wherever the poet fell in with the information, he misunderstood or forgot the particulars; but that they were oral there is little doubt; and if one may argue from the known to the unknown, an imperfect or inaccurate statement by a friend or a casual acquaintance was apt to be responsible for faulty notions about points beyond the immediate or personal cognizance of the dramatist. Since it has been contended that he resorted for his purpose in this case to the original Italian of Vasari, all that can be said is that, had he done so, he would not perhaps have made the mistake.

The characters of Shakespear, drawn from life, as distinguished from those borrowed from books or hearsay, have become, from the long lapse of time and the fundamental changes of sentiment and usage, sufficiently archæological to demand editors and scholiasts. But when these characters were originally depicted on paper, and represented on the boards, they were such as spectators of average opportunities and powers of observation had no difficulty in recognizing and appreciating. The majority of the audience might find it requisite to accept on trust retrospective historical portraitures, emanating from authors whose writings were beyond their reach, and, again, they might not always penetrate the subtle and delicate processes of thought in the speakers charged with the delivery of philosophical speculations. But the traits of common human nature, allusions to customs and beliefs, citations of popular stories and songs,

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went home to all without the glossarial aid, which nearly all at present require. The author transferred to the stage, through the medium of his pen, real men and women, whom he had seen with his own eyes, with a suitable deference to theatrical demands; and those who attended his theatre, if they did not detect their own likenesses, imagined that they detected people not dissimilar from themselves. They heard the language, which was on all lips, and the feelings, which all could reciprocate. They asked for no dictionary of archaisms. It was, one may apprehend, the aim of Shakespear to divest of an air of antiquity, as far as possible, all his impersonations, and hence sometimes sprang his anachronisms.

All evidences adding to the already immensely increased knowledge, that Shakespear faithfully reflects in his admirable writings the language, the spirit, and the usages of his own age, are deserving of notice and preservation. The ludicrous incident in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* of Falstaff concealing himself in the buckbasket carries on the face of it an appearance of improbability, looking at the physical dimensions of the excellent knight, till we see that in those days baskets were not uncommonly employed by porters to convey home persons who did not wish to come under the cognizance of the watch. There is an anecdote of Sir Joceline Percy, who was born in 1578, was knighted in 1599, and died in 1631, where a son of the Earl of Northumberland engages a porter to take him in his basket to the place where the knight lodged, and where the fellow, on his arrival, cleverly eludes observation, and deters spectators by giving out that his freight has the *falling* sickness. This gentleman appears from Jonson's *Conversations with Drummond* in 1619 to have been altogether an odd character.

Nevertheless, the unlikelihood of Falstaff meeting with a basket of this or any other kind capable of forming a temporary refuge for his person, so far from disappearing, preserves its original vigour.

¹ Thoms' *Anecdotes and Traditions*, 1839, pp. 65-6.

The critical (and perhaps somewhat vulnerable) rejoinder of Jonson, that it would have been well if Shakespear, instead of never blotting a line, had blotted a thousand, is in harmony with the persuasion of many, who peruse the plays and poems (especially the Sonnets); and Cowley the poet was of the same way of thinking. Taking the heavy aggregate, there is an abundance of passages, which might have been revised, of lines, which might have been cancelled, of phrases, which have the air of having been insufficiently considered; and the present point is the more remarkable, since, on the contrary, there are hundreds of instances, where the texture and language of a sentence, as left by the poet, could not be altered without injury to the extent of a single word. This inconsistency and inequality are not easily explainable, because we do not know with any degree of precision how the poet worked, and can merely surmise from their character in what way the additions to the First Folio were made from the antecedent quartos or from unprinted scriveners' copies alike bearing the latest corrections of the author. The doubt and obscurity are equally palpable in the Sonnets, but on a different ground, inasmuch as we cannot trace their history in their passage from the hands of the writer to those of the printer; and a farther difficulty is made by the rhymed tags and certain current allusions introduced on the spur of the moment, like the mention of the loss of Marlowe in *As You Like It*—a deplorable couplet, disfiguring that beautiful drama, and, curiously enough, incorrectly introduced by Chapman, possibly from recollection, in the *Blind Beggar of Alexandria*. It is the transcendent merit of Shakespear at his best, which throws into such conspicuous relief inferior passages, and leads us to ask ourselves, whether they are due to the same pen. The growth of experience and taste in such a case as the present is a fact too obvious for discussion. We have only to place side by side *Love's Labor's Lost* and the *Taming of a Shrew* with *Hamlet*, *Lea*r, and the *Tempest*; and a comparison of the *Induction* to the first-named piece

and the Players' scene in *Hamlet* demonstrates how the poet chastened and matured his earlier comic or humorous manner; and perchance the serious vein would have been permitted to predominate to a larger extent, if the entire succession of dramas had not been written with a primary view to the approval and applause of an average audience. We have better reason to be grateful than to be surprized, that the dramatist steered so clear in his later and independent work of the strong meat supplied to the playgoer in his earlier days by a group of melodramatists, who seemed to aim at outvying each other. It was a very arduous task to combine commercial success on the stage with improved methods and a higher standard.

We are all aware that *Hamlet* recalls to the Players a drama—an excellent one indeed—which was never acted, quoth he, because it pleased not the million; it was *caviare* to the general.¹ Our poet understood his business no less than his art, yet he carefully and wisely avoided that error of the Greek and Roman playwrights in depicting current and local manners and thought instead of the general and enduring truth of Nature. The writers for the stage and even for the closet, who, like Aristophanes in his Comedies, and Erasmus in his *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, too much deferred to temporary convention and sentiment, are apt to grow illegible, because they demand at every other line an explanatory clavis.

The illiteracy of the poet, for which the evidence is in my judgment wanting, if we recollect that the acquaintance with certain points in history, geography, and science was in his day, and long after, very imperfect, was, no doubt, at an early stage, a piece of criticism levelled against him by men, like Jonson, of larger academical acquirements, and the object of the stricture must have soon become sensible of its share of truth, and have applied himself, with the aid, partly of books, partly of more learned friends outside the dramatic world, to the removal or mitigation of the

¹ Act II., Scene 2.

fault, insomuch that here and there classical references are introduced, as, for instance, in the dialogue between Launcelot Gobbo and Jessica, in the *Merchant of Venice*, with total unfitness. To rebut the charge of want of scholarship the author committed the not unusual error of ascribing scholarship to persons, who were not likely to possess any, and on the other hand of indiscreetly bringing in unsuitable quotations. Gobbo, as a Venetian or Italian, very naturally uses the term *Via!* for *Away!* but in the same speech he betrays his ignorance by speaking of "devil incarnation." The writer of the original *Taming of a Shrew*, 1594, makes Sly the tinker in the *Induction* use the words *Omne bene*, and Shakespear quite as infelicitously, in his version, puts into the mouth of the same character the exclamation *paucas pallabris*—an incorrect text of a familiar Spanish saying.

In *As You Like It* Touchstone is made to say: "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths"; to which Jaques rejoins: "O knowledge ill-inhabited! worse than Jove in a thatched house." The allusion is to the residence of Ovid in Pontus, of which he wrote a metrical account; but, as there is no early English version of *De Ponto*, Shakespear most probably caught from some one the piece of personal history, and gives Touchstone the credit of knowing a point in classical lore, of which he was profoundly unaware; but that he had acquainted himself with the original Latin of some of the Roman poet's works we seem to have an indication in the early citation of a couplet from the *Amores* and in the trace of a recent perusal of the *Fasti* in *Hamlet*, where he makes the Prince and Laertes familiar with Pelion and Ossa and Olympos, as naturally ascribing to them learning, which they did not possess, as in his reference to Ossa he evolves from his imagination a figure, of which no other brain might have been capable. The comment of Jaques may serve as a reproof both for the English poet and his character. The definition of Ovid as capricious (the Italian

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capricious) or goatish may have had something to do with the goats of Audrey, and almost betrays such a man as Florio in the way of a coach; the epithet *honest* is less reconcileable.

Elsewhere he cites the comedies of Plautus and Seneca as the best, without being fully aware of the immense difference between the two writers. The former he perhaps knew chiefly, if not solely, from the English version of the *Menecmi*, 1595. The latter was accessible to him in the translation of 1581, but has not been credited with laying him under any literary obligation.

I trust, however, that I shall be able to induce many to cross over with me to the other side, when I declare the opinion, not that Shakespear was a scholar in the sense that Jonson, Selden, and Drayton were, but that he devoted his utmost energy and attention to the supply of any educational deficiencies by fertile contact with others. Jonson, whose sentiments and views were apt to fluctuate in obedience to passing impressions, recorded his notions about Shakespear, when the latter was no more, in terms to some extent qualified, yet on the whole significant of his sense of the possession by the departed poet of exceptionally high gifts. The dramatic compositions, instead of being founded on local or popular incidents, are almost, with the single exception of the *Merry Wives*, which was influenced by the association of Windsor with the Court, either historical or continental, which may be thought to impugn the authorship of the apocryphal pieces. His own proverbial maxim:

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin"

was, in its usually accepted sense, splendidly exemplified in the poet's daring disregard of all unities, and reliance for success and approbation on a profound truth of insight and an amazing intellectual fecundity. He, in common, according to Florio, with all our English playwrights, made havoc of history, biography, and chronology; yet he produced work of a quality which makes us lose sight of rules, and

forgive the violence offered on nearly every page to the prejudices even of a moderately educated reader. The ranger over the universal domain of human thought and wisdom, many of whose lines are familiar to millions ignorant of their source, was not to be constrained by scholastic and local technicalities. His *dramatis personæ* were drawn from all sides, and became naturalized subjects of the British crown almost as much as the actors who filled the parts.

It is to be well considered that, had Shakespear been a scholar, even to the extent and in the sense, in which Jonson and Chapman were scholars, he would almost certainly have displeased and disappointed us by the display of the faults and blemishes incidental to scholarship. Of Shakespear's method this is predicable, that he never adopted any story or antecedent drama as a whole; he treated the material at his command even in the First Sketches as a mere *nucleus*, which he filled up and finished in his own way, and so it was in a larger measure, as was to be expected, in his later and more independent work. He took a phrase here, a sentence there, in a third quarter a notion or the groundwork of a novel. But he adopted no more than he chose, and not seldom altered even that. As far as his occasional slips are concerned, many of them may be set down to his too precipitate adoption of a channel for giving utterance to the ideas, which all too thickly thronged in his brain. We cannot fail to observe, how different is the text of *Romeo and Juliet* from the almost undoubted and exclusive originals, Broke and Painter: how Shakespear has merely used his guides, so far as it suited him, and has avoided their prolixity and dilation—how, in other words, he has displayed here, as elsewhere, precisely that art and scope, which in one of his *Sonnets* he perhaps somewhat disingenuously professes to desire.

If in certain places Shakespear approached a little more nearly to the normal level, by his higher flights, more frequent and more conspicuous in some of his maturer work—his tragedies, above all—he makes the rest appear to us by

comparison less brilliant and less exceptional. It would not be very difficult to select from his writings specimens, which in a detached form might strike a person unacquainted with the merits of the author as mediocre or commonplace; and the same experiment applied to any great man of letters would be apt to lead to a similar result. Homer sometimes nodded, we are told; and the greatest minds occasionally fall short of their highest capability. Shakespear in one way is entitled to more indulgent consideration even than a writer who, like Montaigne, subjected his text to careful and repeated correction; yet this standpoint, again, offers a saving clause; for, looking at the extent, variety, and compass of the Plays, it is surely wonderful that, in spite of the author's unfortunate licence to his printers, in addition to his failure to revise the manuscripts, there has come down to us all such a monument as no other age, no other country, can shew. Truly, as Bacon puts it, borrowing the figure from his predecessor Gascoigne, a man's nature runs either to Herbs or Weeds; Shakespear's trended not a little toward the former, but with a most rich infusion of what Gascoigne classes as Flowers.

The general estimate of him by Jonson is not altogether untrue or unfair, especially if we place ourselves in his situation. For, if we demur to his approximate collocation of Kyd with Shakespear, it is certain that Marlowe and Lyly were inspiring influences, and that their work was not inattentively studied by Shakespear for his own melodramatic and mythological creations. The debt of one sort to Lyly in his fairy scenes and songs is as clear as that of another and less momentous sort in his *Euphues*.¹

We are enabled to look at the whole question in perspective, and to exercise a judgment based on the modern canons of comparative criticism. Jonson was not so situated. He evidently entertained an exalted estimate of the powers of Shakespear, and preserved to the last his private friendship with him. But he equally knew

¹ See Notes to *Love's Labor's Lost* infra.

Marlowe, and had facilities superior to ours for measuring the relative pretensions of the two writers, and for learning the extent of the indebtedness of Shakespear to his predecessor in tragic poetry. Considering that in 1602, when he printed his *Poetaster*, Marlowe had been seven years in his grave, and that the Stratford dramatist, and not himself, was generally admitted to have not only succeeded to the first place, but to have far outshone his precursor, the tone and attitude of Jonson may be accepted as magnanimous, particularly if (of which there can be barely any doubt) for the *Virgil* of the Jonsonian piece we are at liberty to substitute another name. Yet the magnanimity was surpassed, when Shakespear (if the tradition be true) overpersuaded the actors, who had been disposed to refuse *Every Man in his Humour*,—at a moment, when its acceptance was vitally important to the author. For the play is dull and prolix enough, and the part assigned to Shakespear—that of Knowell—was one, which he could scarcely have relished, if there had been any choice. The prodigious disparity, which in a few years manifested itself, between Shakespear and his dramatic contemporaries was not only imperfectly evident to the immediate age, but to many succeeding generations; and it is almost the case that his full honours have come to him only within the memory of some yet living.

By what process the poet assisted his memory by committing to paper impressions, remarks, names, and other details, which he might not require for immediate use, we are only able to guess from the common habit of the time, both here and abroad, where writers carried their tablets. Montaigne particularly refers to his in one of his Essays,¹ and seems to have kept them by him, even, perhaps, when they had served their purpose; and Shakespear makes Hamlet² speak of them. They were issued in book-form for the pocket, and although the majority of copies has perished,

¹ Book I., ch. 19.

² Act i., scene 5. When the Ghost has told his tale, the Prince exclaims: "My tables, my tables! meet it is I set it down."

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eight London impressions are recorded between 1577 and 1625. They were of all ephemerides the least likely to survive. What can be more natural and legitimate to suppose than that the poet should give his character—his *alter ego*—what he himself was wont to use? There is no doubt that literary Englishmen formerly took these tablets to the theatre for the purpose of making memoranda likely to serve them in their work. They were part of the vast heritage of modern Europe from the ancients. The tragic poet Euripides is reported to have carried with him at his girdle his tablet and stylus to assist his recollection.

In the *Clouds* of Aristophanes Strepsiades records his debts and the names of his creditors in his tablets. The Friar in Chaucer has this method of making notes; and something of the same kind has been related of our King Alfred and his handbook, and of the good Queen Bertha of France, wife of Robert le Pieux. A very beautiful cover in sculptured ivory of one of the fourteenth century was accidentally found in a hedge at Bodmin in Cornwall in 1865. In 1622 James Howell sent his friend Caldwell a silver Dutch example—one bound in silver. A very considerable number of perfect and artistic specimens of various origin is known to exist. So that I hardly comprehend why Gesner has made the article figure in his *Gallery of Obsolete Inventions*, 1565, when it was in such general vogue in his day, and in the days before him, nor is yet out of fashion.¹

¹ In my grandfather Hazlitt's *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy*, 1826, he mentions a fellow-traveller, a Spaniard, who carried his tables.

CHAPTER XVIII

Proneness of Shakespear to Farce—Its origin and motives—Prominence on title-pages of comic impersonations—The Clown on the old stage—Tarlton, Kempe, and Armin—Free use of the names of real personages in plays—Oldcastle and Fastolfe—Parsons the Jesuit as a critic of Shakespear—The Boar's Head—*Dramatis Personæ*—Ariel and Puck—Illustrations of critical indecorum—The snatches and fragments of ballads introduced into the plays and their frequent impropriety.

WHEN Shakespear began to write for the stage in London, after a certain introductory training at home, at school, and among his young friends and neighbours far and near, the farcical element had long been an indispensable feature in performances, even where the ground-plot was of a diametrically opposite drift. This feature entered into dramatic spectacles, when they ceased to be wholly religious or allegorical, and was found to constitute the most attractive part of the entertainment; a study of the earlier volumes of the last edition of Dodsley will shew anyone the stress and reliance laid on the Vice or Clown; and the same experience manifested itself abroad, where actors of English pieces adapted for continental use, foreigners or otherwise, learned to depend on the comic side, and to make that the leading, instead of the subsidiary, business. Milton blamed his own literary contemporaries for "intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity, brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people"; but he was scarcely a good witness, and Shakespear would not have made so excellent a thing of dramatic composition, if he had had the opportunity of following the admonition of the later writer, who ruined one of his best pieces—his *Lycidas*—by a most undramatic conclusion.

Shakespear, with his natural insight, wrote to some extent down to the popular grasp and call, and I even hold that he did so not altogether without a certain share of genuine relish and complacency, an inheritance from early rural associations, and indeed from hereditary sympathy as early as 1592, when he could hardly have been much known as a dramatist—certainly not as an original one, Chettle in his *Kindheart's Dream* recognizes his "facetious grace in writing." A Yorkshireman, George Daniel of Beswick, member of a knightly family, and himself a votary of the Muses, testifies to the weight which the popular impressions of the poet carried in his case, where he says in *A Vindication of Poetry* :—

"Dramon is sweet and smooth, though not exact
Perhaps to stricter eyes, yet he shall live
Beyond their malice. To the scene and act
Read some Shakespeare—"

Daniel had from his own account, in his prolix effort entitled *Trinarchodia*, 1650, witnessed the performance of those dramas in which Sir John Falstaff successively appeared, and describes the personal appearance of the fat Knight on the boards, which had yielded him in bygone years sincere enjoyment. This gentleman came into the world in the very year in which Shakespear left it—an inadequate compensation! But Milton and Daniel were far from standing alone in adopting such a view, for in his *Worthies*, 1662, Fuller observes of him: "Though his genius generally was jocular, and inclining him to festivity, yet he could, when so disposed, be solemn and serious, as appears by his tragedies," which last, however, our excellent author could find no better term than *mournful* to characterize.

The bulk of our early dramatic literature, anterior to Shakespear, or belonging to his era, is principally of value and interest as illustrative of manners and customs, and we should, no doubt, be poorer without it; but the more finished and thoughtful work of Shakespear, on the contrary, uniquely

impresses us with its profundity and permanence, combined with an apparent absence of effort and what the poet himself terms "a property of easiness." One or two of his contemporaries here and there approach him more or less nearly; but it is needless to say that none of them has left behind him a literary inheritance a hundredth part so wealthy—scarcely all of them together. He has not only drawn an extensive and varied series of characters for our profit and delight, but he has made them all shareholders in his own catholic humanity.

The mind of the poet could scarcely fail to have been powerfully impressed and influenced by the succession of pieces appertaining either to the category of mere farces or drolleries, or to the department of regular comedy with a conspicuous share of humorous incident, which issued from the press in the half century antecedent to his career as a dramatist, and which were readily available in shops and on stalls. Such performances as *Thersites* and *Jack Juggler*, *Ralph Roister Doister* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, were doubly serviceable, inasmuch as they not only grounded him in the rudiments of his art, but shewed the class of amusement, which the general taste demanded and enjoyed, if not as the main element, at any rate as an auxiliary one. At the same time we do not fail to observe that, while he lavishly introduced humorous incidents, phrases, and notions into his work for the stage, he never advertized such matter on the bills, as it were, at a time, when so many dramatists and popular writers were making humour their cue and cry—almost wearing it threadbare.

His attention was drawn to Plautus by the English version of the *Menæchmi*, published in 1595; but at a prior date an adaptation of the *Amphitruo* of the same Roman author had appeared under the above-mentioned title of *Jack Juggler*—a piece of coarse humour, which must have commended itself to Shakespear, whatever its shortcomings may have been in his eyes.

The *gods* have, from the most ancient times, jealously

asserted their rights. Seneca,¹ speaking of the *Mimes* of Publius Syrus, implies that they were calculated by their language for the upper gallery; but even Aristophanes found it imperative to obey the immediate humour of the public in a State more prone than England to fluctuations of sentiment and resources. But, save in the Oldcastle and Falstaff episodes, Shakespear, unlike the Greek comedian, never permitted himself an indulgence in broad and palpable personalities. Shakespear here obeyed a traditional demand; and it was, we may be sure, no reluctant compliance. In the Chorus at the end of the *Second Part of Henry IV.* we recollect that the author promises another play with Sir John Falstaff in it as the foremost attraction.

A glance at some of the dramas in their original printed state will satisfy us that the comic effects were a source of great reliance, if not to the author, to his publisher—arguably to both. This is particularly evident from the prominence accorded to the fat Knight in the *Merry Wives*, as published in 1602; and a second feature, which makes itself conspicuous from the outset, is the presence of the conceit. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labor's Lost* are termed "excellent conceited comedies"; it was a homage to a different and higher type of visitor; and indeed the *Merry Wives* is equally so described. The dramatist angled with two kinds of bait: conceited comedies and lamentable tragedies; and where Shakespear so far outshone his contemporaries was, one feels, in his happy reconciliation of sallies of refined wit and creations of a splendid and exuberant fancy with popularity of manner and form.

The discovery, which was common to the Continent, of the vulgar predilection for what was entertaining rather than instructive or artistic, accounts for the English series of *Drolls*, which were the comic portions of plays altered to suit the requirements of showmen at fairs and markets. All that the popular voice demanded in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, was an interlude called *Bottom the*

¹ Beloe's *Aulus Gellius*, iii. 301.

Weaver; and this, and others constructed on the same principle, proved saleable, when Kirkman offered them about 1660 in a printed shape. The clown usurped the first place in the bill. It was, to a certain extent, however, a return to an early sentiment and practice. In 1576 the comedy of *Common Conditions* is explicitly stated on the title-page to be so named after the Vice. In his later compositions Shakespear evinced a tendency to depose the clown from his earlier rank, and to make him a subsidiary expedient.

This was a departure from the complete presentation of a drama distinct from the case, where as in 1601 a scene from *Richard II.* or *Henry IV.* was given on political grounds in several parts of London, and equally so from the occasional practice of curtailing a performance for exhibition at Court, as in the abridged versions of *Much Ado* in 1619 under the names of *Benedick and Beatrice* and of *Twelfth Night* shown in the early part of 1623 under the title of *Malvolio*, or once more, as in the revival of *Henry VIII.*, about the period of the Restoration at a school, almost inevitably in an abridged shape.¹

The early *status* of the clown in the drama necessarily underwent many changes and vicissitudes. In the rudimentary and transitional productions, this personage, in his capacity as the Vice, is seen to occupy a rank proportioned to the character of the piece, but to fill a part superior to that, which was eventually allotted to him under the more modern appellation. A few men of genius lent special importance to this feature in theatrical exhibitions both before and during the age of Shakespear, who must have received from his father, as well as by way of a general tradition, a notion of the character, as it prevailed under some of the earlier Tudors; and their performances, although from their nature and object eminently and primarily ludicrous, were equally distinct from the later performance—almost in dumb-show in the days of Grimaldi—and from the still more contemporary and vulgar treatment,

¹ See Notes under *Henry VIII.*

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which reduced the clown to a motley and garrulous buffoon. On the Elizabethan stage his presence was felt to be essential as a leaven and a relief to the more serious business; and there is a strong probability, that an actor of such a class, who could hold an audience, was not only very valuable, but exercised his own fancy and discretion in utterances not found in his copy, still less in the printed book transmitted to us, which is precisely what his successors have continued to do.

The contact of Shakespear as a youth with Tarlton, that great master in the art, as it began to be understood and practised in the Elizabethan age, was an excellent introduction to a knowledge of the means of drawing houses; and I shall be surprized, if I am mistaken in my theory, that in this department Shakespear should be regarded as Tarlton's pupil. But he lived to witness the practicability of introducing to the stage, as in *Twelfth Night*, a chastened type, a creation more refined than even in some of his own anterior work.

Besides Tarlton, Kempe, and Augustine Phillips who at all events occasionally appeared in low comedy, a man highly distinguished as a comic artist was Robert Armin, apparently a native of Cheshire, and originally apprenticed to a goldsmith in Lombard Street, while Tarlton was keeping a tavern in Gracechurch Street just by; the goldsmith's assistant was led by this circumstance and a natural inclination to change his vocation; Tarlton made him his adopted son, inviting him to his own performances; and the experiment succeeded. So careers are diverted; so Shakespear himself narrowly escaped becoming a Stratford alderman. Armin had belonged to the Curtain in 1600; but in 1605 he was on the staff of the Globe; he so describes himself on the title-pages of two successive editions of a tract printed by him in those years, and he is said in *Tarlton's Jestes* to be then (that is, when they were printed) playing there; and of course Shakespear and he were necessarily intimate. He perhaps helped to console the poet for the loss of his old Shoreditch friend. Armin was, as I say, a

man who, in common with Tarlton and possibly Kempe, interested himself with matters outside the theatre. Besides the piece above noticed he wrote in 1590 a preface to *A Brief Resolution of a Right Religion*, by C. S., when he was perhaps a young man, and in 1604 some forewords to the account published by his relative Gilbert Dugdale of the Caldwell case; in 1609 he brought out a translation of the Eighth Night, Fifth Novel of the *Notti Piacevole* of Straparola, under the title of *The Italian Taylor and his Boy*, which he honourably declares in the dedication to Lord and Lady Haddington to be the work of Matthew Roydon, then probably advanced in years, who was living in retirement in Sussex. I say thus much of Armin, because I take him to have belonged to the later Shakespear circle, as the elder Burbage and Tarlton did to the earlier one; and there is the collateral and by no means unimportant point that Straparola had English admirers and readers at that date. It was in the same year, that the Children of the Revels performed his *History of the Two Maids of More-clacke* [Mortlake], in which Armin took the part of John of the Hospital, the Very Fool of his tract on the Six Sorts of Fools, 1600, and the supposed original of the proverb, "As mad as a batter."

There are many enough, who might plead guilty to a relish for the humorous scenes in the old play, where they are of their kind excellent, and next to them perhaps the sublimely tragic impress us, yet in so different a way, and so much more involuntarily. A line of distinction has to be drawn, however, between the humorous vein in Falstaff and other characters, where the author indulges with gusto his own propensity for wit and fun, and those rather tiresome and weak tongue-combats, where he obeys the fashion of the day, as in *Love's Labor's Lost*. The comic and autobiographical elements are found in a thinner strain in the later plays and the Roman series; and we feel the loss. The sublimely tragical and philosophical passages or scenes have of course their own splendid merit and irresistible fascination,

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especially such conceptions as Hamlet, Jaques, Lear, and even Timon; and we seem to think that we should know sadly less of Shakespear, were we without the prince of Denmark, in whose name and in the *Sonnets* he so preciously reveals to us his own personality. Yet in the Comedies he was most himself—his saner, healthier self. Certain of the dramatic works might be happily bartered for one or two more pieces, unfolding farther particulars of the life, and completing or verifying imperfect or dubious vestiges; and Shakespear might bear the strain, if a few characters and passages were cancelled.

Side by side with the comic propensity and vein, which had of course its professional justification, there was the strong and even coarse melodramatic element in some of the plays, especially those revised by him at the commencement of his career, such as *Titus Andronicus*; and here, again, he responded to a taste and a call, which have always existed, and which are by no means extinct; and it is a circumstance as noteworthy as it is honourable, that he so soon weaned himself from the school of Preston, Kyd, and Marlowe, if not of Greene and Peele, and educated his audiences in productions of a purer and higher cast.

The usurpation of the names of living personages, where purely fictitious and fanciful ones might have served equally well, is quite characteristic of the poet, and almost a foible; in one instance, in the second part of *Henry IV.* where Shallow recalls his former associates at Clement's Inn, we seem to have a medley of real and fanciful names; yet Shakespear was uncommonly successful in encountering strange patronymics, which have been not seldom casually authenticated by counterparts in modern days. Provincial nomenclature almost awaits an editor. There is in the *Merry Wives* the physician Caius, a sort of droll, with his Anglo-French jargon. The name is evidently taken from a well-known Cambridge scholar and antiquary, who was living within the time of Shakespear; but the personality and character seem to be a composite invention; the real

Caius has been thought to have been a Rosicrucian, yet he had little enough in common with his theatrical namesake, and the latter is not impossibly a portrait of an eccentric medical man, who practised at Windsor about the time. Dr. Caius speaks broken English, but barely a Frenchman's broken English.¹ The *Duke de Jarmany* would have probably had the same nondescript gibberish put into his mouth, had he been brought on the stage. The diction of Caius is *sui generis*; as mine host of the Garter puts it, "he hacks our English." Those—and there must have been many—who had been familiar with the real personage, were apt to feel some mystification at his dramatic presentment, claiming a nationality not his own, and murdering a language which was so. The selection of Windsor itself as the scene of the play had more than one plea in its favour. It was a frequent seat of the Court; the Duke had been invested with the Garter there, and there was the adjacent forest with its Herne myth.

A parallel case of the adoption of actual names is found in the Welsh parson Evans, for it seems that there was a curate at Cheltenham just a little anterior to the date of the play, one Sir John Evans, whose burial is recorded under 1574, and of whom the poet might have casually heard. Dramatic licence seems to have been almost unlimited in the absence of special circumstances. The play of *Arden of Feversham*, founded on a terrible murder during the reign of Edward VI., was played on the stage when members of the family concerned were still living, and when Shakespear, descended from the Warwickshire branch, was on the ground to witness the performance, with the authorship or recension of which he has been rather hastily credited; and there was the yet more striking case of the dramatization in 1602 by William Haughton of a much more recent crime, the murder by

¹ It is to be regretted that we have no knowledge of the *French Doctor*, acted by the Lord Admiral's Servants at the Rose Theatre in 1595. Hazlitt's *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, p. 91.

Francis Cartwright of a clergyman named Storr, which had taken place only in the August of the year named. A play on the murder of Robert Beech, a chandler in Thames Street, and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* were similarly presented without ostensible interference or offence within the briefest possible interval from the actual occurrences in 1594 and 1605. Once more, the Page family, so conspicuous in the *Merry Wives*, strike one as due to the close neighbourhood of the Pages of Bray in Berkshire at that very time.

Henry VIII. is of course outside the present category, so far as regards personalities. Its references to Elizabeth had ceased to awaken criticism or action, when it was put on the stage in the time of her successor. By his nomenclature he ostensibly set far less store than by his portraiture. Where he has not bestowed appellations belonging to real and almost contemporary persons, he has been content, especially in his subsidiary characters, to bestow the first name which occurred to his mind. Such an one as Petrucchio, in the *Taming of a Shrew*, was within his hearing or knowledge when the drama was in preparation; it is found in Gascoigne's *Supposes*, 1566; there was Ludovico Petrucchio, who was concerned in a book on the Spanish Armada, and Petrucchio Ubaldini, who published several works at London and elsewhere about the same time. The adoption of the name was Shakespear's, for in the foundation-piece of 1594 it does not occur. Perhaps one of the most casual loans of this sort was that of Gadshill as the name of an ostler in the *First Part of Henry IV.*, where the actual scene is in the near vicinity.

There is the appeal to the less educated spectators in the jargon put into the mouths of foreigners here and elsewhere, picked up from intercourse even with real persons, who are sufficiently numerous at this date, and substantiated by the polyglot vocabularies and conversation-books, which were found indispensable, as habits of travelling abroad became more general here and on the Continent.¹ The Eliza-

¹ Hazlitt's *Schools, Schoolbooks, and Schoolmasters*, 1888, p. 255, et seqq.

bethan Englishman possessed a fair acquaintance with French and even Italian, nor was the Dutch language by any means unknown; but German was scarcely at all understood, and there were no educational works at that time devoted to it. Germany was almost as much a *terra incognita* in the sixteenth century as America or Polynesia, and the average play-goer had the vaguest idea of a Duke de Jarmany, and might very well imagine a cousin-german and a German cousin to be one and the same. The prevailing ignorance is illustrated by the successful impersonation by swindlers of representatives of some German potentate, as commemorated in the *Merry Wives*. The strange word *Garmombles* may have been an imperfect grasp of *Graf Mompelgart* [Montbeliard] or a distortion of the name itself.

The name of Falstaff, and his association with the Boar's Head in Cheap, have awakened a good deal of discussion and speculation. Shakespear, having abandoned the name of Oldcastle (Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps explicitly asserts, by the command of the Queen, on the complaint of the Cobham family), substituted another, which appeared to some a thinly disguised form of that of an ancient and distinguished family in Norfolk and Wiltshire, one member of which, Sir John Fastolfe, was present at Agincourt, and had literary tastes, as in 1450 he persuaded his son-in-law Stephen Scrope to undertake a translation of the *Sayings and Dictes of Philosophers* from the French. The enlistment of names in plays is so often fortuitous or obscure, that there is a great difficulty in tracing their sources. Here the poet found ready to his hand the owners of the Boar's Head in Southwark, which really existed in the time of Henry IV., and took the liberty of transferring it to the other side of the river, where such a house stood in his own day, and converting *Fastolfe* into Falstaff. There is a tradition that the emendation, by which Oldcastle was thus superseded, did not escape the notice of the Fastolfes; but if any direct objection was raised, it was not pressed, or was not successful; and *Falstaff* remained. The resentment of the Caistor

family might have been aggravated by the alleged circumstance that Sir John Fastolfe was credited with certain personal peculiarities not dissimilar from his dramatic counterpart; and the tradition possibly operated to the disadvantage of his representatives. The author of a *Life of St. George of Cappadocia*, 1633, however, refers to him as "a valiant captain, though on the stage they have been pleased to make merry with him." And a writer in the Proceedings of the British Archæological Association for 1858 refutes the charge of cowardice on the field of battle preferred against him in the *First Part of Henry VI.* After all, perhaps, the least sensible proceeding was the bestowal of the nickname of "Falstoffs buckram men" on the seven senior scholars at Magdalen College, Oxford, whom Sir John Fastolfe had endowed from his lands in East Anglia with a benefaction of a silver penny a week each.¹ It was a piece of academical slack-baked humour.

But the surrender of the original name was intentionally or otherwise left incomplete, for in *Henry IV.* Prince Henry addresses the Knight as "my old lad of the castle." As regards the name itself, it is that of several places in England and Ireland, and even of a residence near Hereford.

Parsons the Jesuit was never sorry to have an opportunity of casting a stone at the Protestants and even at the Lollards, for in a work published by him in 1604, when the honoured name of Oldcastle had been withdrawn, so far as we know, from the dramas, where Falstaff now appears, he (Parsons) introduces Oldcastle as "a Ruffian-Knight as all England knoweth, and commonly brought in by comedians on their stages"; which is hardly a correct statement, and the writer characteristically serves his own immediate purpose by representing him as put to death for *robberies* and rebellion under Henry V. Parsons gave a religious opponent, who had long ceased to agitate the world by his sectarian views, the benefit of the delinquencies, which are ascribed by the Elizabethan playwright to a totally distinct person.

¹ Hazlitt's *Proverbs*, 1907, p. 150.

This confusion in the cases of Falstaff and Fastolfe, the two Bardolphs, one a real historical personage, who died about 1404, the other a fanciful creation of a different type, and (in *As You Like It*) the two Jaques, appears to be a Shakespearean idiosyncrasy. Such a thing is unknown to the modern drama; but whether it struck the original audiences as an error or blemish is another matter; the absence of playbills rendered the fault less conspicuous. All that transpires is that the Fastolfes were affronted by the resemblance to their name of that of a disreputable character, aggravated by his association with an inn, of which they were the owners. There is no proof of official interposition in the latter instance. The Oldcastle difficulty had perhaps become a mere recollection, when the drama by Drayton and others upon the real individual was reproduced as one of a series of performances before Charles I. at Hampton Court in 1630.

Long before the dramas in which Falstaff figures were written, Eastcheap had grown celebrated as a centre for houses of entertainment. In the *World and the Child*, an interlude, 1522, there is the following passage:—

“ Yea, and we shall be right welcome I dare well say,
In East Cheap for to dine;
And then we will with Lombards at passage play,
And at the Pope's Head sweet wine assay.”

And in a very early naval song we have:—

“ He that will in East Cheap eat a goose so fat,
With harp, pipe, and song,
Must lie in Newgate on a mat,
Be the night never so leug.”

Lydgate celebrated the locality in his *London Lickpenny*. The Dagger in Cheap is mentioned in *A C. Mery Tale*, 1526, and still survived in the days of the poet. Shakespear had no lack of illustrative material at his very elbow, when he portrayed these festive and popular scenes; and they serve as justifying documents. In modelling or portraying

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Falstaff Shakespear runs prodigally and unctuously riot over this miracle of bulk, and heaps on the huge and jocund knight a pitiless avalanche of expletives, almost as if his pen had broken away from his control. When he cast his eye on the completed passage and picture, he must have chuckled over his own stupendous volley of ludicrous objurgation, his felicitous and exhaustive *tour de force*, that *cornucopia* of wicked raillery, that whole calendar of vituperative nomenclature. Falstaff, however, offers himself here and there in a graver and soberer mood, and we like him little the less; he recalls rather in these serious intervals his creator, who has chosen to make him the exponent of his own political sentiments. When we look more closely at the character, as it has been delineated for us, we begin to ask the question, What sort of man the dramatist desired to represent in regard to his antecedents. The Sir John Fastolfe of history is twice slightly introduced into the *First Part of Henry VI.*, where Shakespear may have met with the name in the course of revising the original piece; but Shakespear's Falstaff has nothing beyond the slightly modified name in common with Fastolfe. The theatrical conception and embodiment are purely Shakespearian, and perhaps a little overdrawn. As a mere soldier, who had retired from the wars, and had the command of leisure to divert himself as he chose, we could understand his associations and the attitude toward him. But he professes to be of equestrian rank, and this was then sparingly bestowed. The author, however, disregarded an incongruity, which was treated, maybe, as privileged; audiences discerned nothing out of keeping, and Elizabeth was perhaps gratified by the commanded presentment of the fat knight in love.

The melodious appellation *Rosalind* was by no means new to English literature, scarcely to Shakespear himself, when he adopted it as one of the *personæ* in *As You Like It*. For in the cast of *Love's Labor's Lost* the slightly variant form *Rosaline* presents itself. But *Rosalind* had been rendered tolerably familiar by Spenser, first in his *Shepherd's*

Calendar, 1579, and again in his *Faëry Queen*, 1590, and, once more, by Lodge in his dull and pedantic novel, which equally saw the light in the last-mentioned year. We do not absolutely know what immediately induced Shakespear to appropriate the name; but as he seems to have glanced at the pamphlet of Lodge, and was ostensibly indebted to it for a general suggestion and outline of the story, the novelist may be entitled to the credit of this contribution. The criticism on Lodge applies only to his prose text, and his treatment of the subject, which betray the influence of Lyly, as some of his vocabulary does that of Spenser; but the lyrical portions are excellent. His book continued to have a sale down to the Civil War: but after 1609 the stationer does not seem to have discerned any lingering virtue in the feature which commended itself to Shakespear so long ago, and does so to us to-day. The conceit had had its run; but for a season it held possession of the public ear, and even in 1604 it retained sufficient fascination to prevail on Thomas Newton to christen a volume *A Fragrant Posy made of Three Flowers: Rose, Rosalind, and Rosemary*. The charm discovered in *Rosalind* extended to no other characters except *Adam Spencer*, who is a compound in Lodge of the Adam and Jaques of the play, in both cases, especially the latter, with a measureless difference, and *Ganymede*, which rather awkwardly becomes in the play, as it is in the romance, the designation of the disguised *Rosalind*. The *Alinda* of Lodge Shakespear transformed into *Celia*, which was just beginning to enjoy a fairly durable acceptance; but he remembered his original, when he made her take the name of *Aliena* in their flight to the forest. The poet in those scenes, where he has portrayed romantic disguises for some temporary purpose, found himself in no want of precedents and prototypes, as the early literature of every European region abounds with adventures, of which the vital essence is the *incognito* eventually revealed.

In christening other *personæ*, the author may seem to betray an indifference, and to have taken any fantastic

forms, which struck his fancy. On our ears they are apt to jar, at least; yet we cannot be sure that, uncouth as they may be, they did not answer the object in view—the amusement of the occupiers of penny seats. The name of Autolycus necessitates a few words. Shakespear, let us suppose, had heard the hero and his reputed attributes mentioned by his learned acquaintances; but the mere name might have met his eye in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid which, whatever may be said about Golding's version, he was surely not incapable of reading in the original, and of which a copy of the Aldine edition of 1502 was an early possession; Chapman's *Odyssey* was too late for the purpose; and most of the authorities, which notice Autolycus, Athenæus included, were scarcely accessible in former days even to the scholar. At any rate the idea conveyed to the dramatist of this character in real life was singularly imperfect and inaccurate, or he has merely adopted the appellation, in the same way that he has adopted others, without any strict historical propriety. But it is worthy of mention that, just about the time when this person of the play was introduced into *A Winter's Tale*, Coryat's *Crudities* had become known in London, and there we have the mountebank with his amorous printed songs. Coryat was by no means an unlikely man, on his return from his Travels in 1611, to have fallen in with the dramatist. His fame had been diffused to an unusual degree by his numerous admirers. Yet a character precisely cognate to Autolycus presents himself in a tract by Thomas Newbery, called *Dives Pragmaticus*, printed in 1563.

The name of Sly, introduced as that of a tinker in the Induction to *The Taming of a Shrew*, and which is adopted from the original 4^o of 1594, was not an unusual one in Shakespear's London. There was a John Sly or Sleas, an actor in Henry VIII.th's time, and a William Sly, a performer in the poet's own plays, of whom there is a contemporary head in the Dulwich Gallery. Unless therefore the poet had a hand in the nomenclature of the present drama, he was not primarily responsible for the freedom; but he can

hardly have had anything to do with so crude a piece of work, which was perhaps suggested by the story of the *Wife Lapped in Morels Skin*. There was in 1612 a Clement Sly, who is described as a fencer and a gallant of London. He closed his career at that date on the scaffold. But for the name itself Shakespear had not to go beyond Stratford. If the poet and Sly the fencer ever saw each other, he is more likely to have acquired technical terms from him or some other practical source than from an obscure Italian treatise of 1610, to which some of the critics refer us. Tarlton was a master of fence; but in this respect he cannot be thought to have been of service.

In the *Tempest* he makes the coarse vixen in the song of Stephano bear the name of the heroine in the former play, adopting, to be sure, that bestowed on her in the foundation-piece of 1594, as though it was associated in his mind with unamiable qualities. I have speculated, whether this feeling had any reference to his sister-in-law Catherine Hathaway; but in 1594 a ballad, no longer known, was printed under the title of *The Cooling of Curst Kate*; it was possibly founded on the piece just then in course of exhibition.

It has been elsewhere indicated that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two of the *dramatis personæ* in *Hamlet*, were not merely names of actual persons, but of persons living in Denmark at the time, to whom, among others, the edition of Tycho Brahe's *Astronomy*, 1602, is in a sense inscribed. The poet can scarcely have possessed or studied the volume; but it is more than likely that he saw it in the hands of some one, or had its immediate bearing on the work in hand pointed out to him.

The vocabulary found in the interlude, which makes part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—Pease-blossom, Moth, Cobweb, Mustard-seed, Squash, and Peascod, strikes us as fantastic and improbable enough; and so it was intended, no doubt, by the poet. Yet there is no limit to the odd patronymics encountered in various records, and lately I met with William Pescod, a book-collector of the eighteenth

century with an ex-libris. Shakespear did not foresee this promotion.

Then, again, the peculiar name of Gobbo in the *Merchant of Venice* makes one speculate whence Shakespear received it. Giovanni Gobbo was a Venetian courier in the service of the Republic about 1517, and frequently brought despatches to the embassy in London; and the family or name survived at Venice down to 1846 in the person of Angelo de' Gobbi, a clown.

The examples of critical indecorum and unfitness are not restricted to the comic parts or to the less mature efforts, for, by way of illustration, the fascinating conception of Ariel in the *Tempest* presents, on closer scrutiny, a serious want of homogeneity. Such a charge demands justification; and it is not difficult to offer it; nor in a minor degree to do so in respect to Puck, who is the corresponding character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Both creations are spiritual and superhuman; and it is here that the inconsistency and contradiction lie, partly because in the delineation of such properties there must always be a difficulty in fixing a limit and a need to be perpetually on one's guard against the incongruous. I suppose Puck to be a development of the Robin Goodfellow of prose fiction, a spirit which, under different names, seems to have been common to European folk-lore. In Act ii., Sc. 1, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and within a few lines, the poet appears to portray a character out of harmony with itself; for he makes Oberon, addressing Puck, to say:—

"That very time I saw, but thou could'st not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth —"

Yet, just beneath, we have:—

"Puck: I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes."

Where the time is a figure of speech, as forty seconds, or four, would be equally appropriate and credible. The

delimitation of time strikes one as unhappy, unless we are to credit the poet with a forestalment of the electric telegraph. Then, again, where Puck reappears, having procured the narcotic juice, he cannot at first find the object of his quest; and a little farther, where Oberon comes on, and to him Puck, the former has to be advised what has occurred. Puck farther commits a mistake by applying the juice to the wrong person. We have to be careful when we play with edged tools.

When we turn to the *Tempest* and consider the part of Ariel, it is not the same thing, and Ariel is as superior to Puck as the *Tempest* itself is to the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He realizes in an immeasurably higher degree our ideal of a spirit, incorporeal, invisible, omnipotent: yet he is represented as having been a captive and a thrall under the dominion of a witch, whom Prospero reduced to submission; and the sole evidence of the source of the latter's power consists of his possession of a book and a staff. He is realized to us as a deposed Italian Prince, who has presumably studied in earlier life and during his tenure of authority the magical art, which enables him to win the island from a potent necromancer, Sycorax, mother of Caliban, to liberate Ariel, whom he makes his instrument, and to convert Caliban into a serf. The latter is depicted as a mere clown, destitute of the maternal gifts, yet sensible of the wrong which he has suffered, and appealing to a deity of his own for redress and protection.

But the key to the control, first of Sycorax, and then of Prospero, over Ariel can hardly be said to be fully forthcoming. The power of this spirit is more conspicuous in some ways than that of his master, yet he is successively betrayed into servitude by a witch and an unprofessional student of the occult sciences; and the superhuman faculty of the latter seems to be mainly limited to the command of the services of a spirit, who is lord of all save his own freedom. In his conception of Ariel, Shakespear recollected Puck; and the mightier fairy combines, as we perceive, some

of the qualifications of Robin Goodfellow or Brownie. Where all is imaginary, the licence is infinite; but it must be nicely adjusted, and the very luxuriance of the author's fancy has led him here and there into discrepancies. Of these not the least serious is that in the scene, where he makes this spirit play on a tabor and pipe, unless we are to conclude, that Ariel created a sound resembling those instruments. The inconsistency, however, is not limited to a single passage, for in another place Ariel helps to attire Prospero. These contradictions are not unfrequent in Oriental literature; in the *Arabian Nights* the Ifritah is delivered from a mightier power by a mortal, to whom she dedicates her services thenceforth, and she farther announces to the Caliph that she is a Moslem.¹

The presentation of Ariel in the song, "Where the bee sucks, there lurk I," is absolutely incompatible with the notion, which the poet elsewhere gives us, of the nature either of Puck or of Ariel. A spirit may have no dimensions; we have no warrant for defining its aspect or compass; but it must be affirmed and allowed that we have before us in the two plays pieces of mythological invention irreconcilable with each other. Even the most palpable fable or fiction has to shew an oneness.

In Oriental fiction, where the operations of Nature are suspended with Oriental despotism, these matters are better managed; the transformation or transition is instantaneous; the illusion is absolute; and so it is to a considerable extent in the Teutonic folk-lore. For a magician or necromancer there is neither time nor space; it is pure volition.

His debt to anterior or contemporary literature for his fairy mythology does not appear to exceed the barest hints, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, so dependent on this feature, betrays slight traces indeed of direct external assistance, although the influence of Lyly has been put forward with some show of reason. The burlesque performance, to which the interlude amounts, was perhaps suggested by a

¹ Ed. 1896, i. 163.

poem on the same subject from the pen of Dunstan Gale, ready for the press in 1596, and not improbably printed, yet not at present known in so early an issue; and this might tend to fix the production of the drama between that date and 1600, when it appeared in type.

The monograph of Chappell on the Music of the Olden Time touches our subject at many points, particularly in respect to the display of acquaintance with musical terminology in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. But singing, accompanied by instrumental harmony or otherwise, was universal during the reigns of Elizabeth and her successor, as we know that it once more became under Charles II. There Shakespear could work *ad vivum*, and might have under his observation day by day the means of elaborating and verifying his descriptions. Nor where he painted foreign scenes and allusions of such a class, was he so prone to misdirection, since so many of the composers and musicians in England in his day were either Frenchmen or Italians, or countrymen who had acquired part of their education abroad, or, again, like the author of the *Polyolbion*, a Warwickshire man, prided themselves on the wide scope of their culture. Here, too, we have to presume verbal communication, for I do not think that there is any absolute evidence of the friendship of Shakespear with the composers of his age, immensely probable as it may seem, for we do not hear of his acquaintance even with Henry Walker of Blackfriars, the vendor of the premises there to him, and described as a Minstrel,¹ till 1613.

There appears to be no satisfactory solution of the origin or source of many of those whimsical snatches and fragments which the poet, apart from complete songs or ballads, has introduced into his plays; and the reason for the difficulty and obscurity may be the natural fate of all such ephemerides, more especially, when they were not committed to

¹ That is, I presume, a member of the Minstrels' or Musicians' Guild, existing in 1472-3, and reincorporated in 1804. It was a poor fraternity; but Walker seems to have been a man of some substance.

type or even to writing. "King Stephen was a noble peer," "Then up he rose," and a few others, strike one as having been playful inventions of the dramatist. But it is truly hazardous to venture on any conclusion. Chappell's list of tunes and airs, though very copious, is still imperfect enough, and hundreds of these popular jingles have doubtless perished without leaving a trace behind them. The same thing is happening under our own eyes. It strikes one as being a circumstance not quite without its significance, in respect to the Stephen fragment, that in 1660 the *History of King Stephen*, by William Shakespear, was registered at Stationers' Hall. Of its character, as it is so far unregained, one can say nothing, and the attribution may have been erroneous. It is to be hoped that, as a whole, it was superior to the sample in *Hamlet*, if that belonged to it.

The bridal *reveille matin* in *Cymbeline*, or what appears to be so intended, "Hark! hark! the lark—" was one of a body of compositions of the same class, of which the Stationers' Register preserves a record, the actual texts not having survived.¹

As a partial clue to this minor detail, I do not think that I can do better than refer the reader to Dr. Rimbault's *Little Book of Songs and Ballads*, 1851. There we may observe among the varied contents several quaint and scrappy compositions, some taken from old music-books, and akin to those in the pages of Shakespear, to which I am immediately alluding.

The art of song-writing, both original and adapted, was of very ancient growth and of very extensive development, even before the idea of introducing lyrical productions into plays had arisen in England. The celebrated composition in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, "Back and side go bare—" seems to have been taken up by the writer into his text, for it exists in a MS. older even than the reputed date of the play (1566), and probably a considerable proportion of this

¹ More on this subject may be seen in my *Faiths and Folklore*, 1905, p. 451.

feature in works for the stage was derived from manuscript, printed, or oral sources, some no longer traceable. Shakespear, in common with his fellow-playwrights, was not unapt to appropriate what he found suitable to his purpose in this as in other ways, although there are a few instances, where independent parentage cannot so far be established, and where the signal merit favours one conclusion. The songs in *Ralph Roister Doister* have much the air of having been Udall's own invention.

Shakespear, more especially when he had acquired a substantial stake in the theatres, to which he attached himself, was obliged to keep a side-look to the galleries; and hence arise these *ad captandum* features even in his ripest work, proving his sense of a need for reaching the less critical portion of the audience. Otherwise it would be inconceivable that in *Othello* he could deem it expedient to insert such grossly incongruous fragments as are put into the mouth of Iago; and in the *Tempest*, composed even later—about 1612-13—there are vestiges of the same leaven explainable and justifiable only on the same ground.

That Shakespear lent himself to the popular appetite for the humorous element, even when it was inappropriate, we have no need to feel surprize; but he makes noble amends by giving us some of the most beautiful and captivating lyrics in the language, melodious productions which we may be sure charmed Elizabethan audiences at least as intensely as they do us in the book at the present hour. The first song of Autolycus in the *Winter's Tale*: "When daffodils begin to peer," is on the exact lines of some which occur in *Englands Helicon*, 1600—a volume of the highest interest, probably superintended by Anthony Babington of Warrington, who has an introductory sonnet, and in which I am disposed to recognize the poet as more than a contributor; and in the structure of the dainty little composition, with which *Twelfth Night* concludes, we are reminded of one or two of the roundelays in the same pure and fragrant miscellany.

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As I have referred to Dr. Rimbault and Mr. Chappell for the musical side of this question, I may permit myself to take a similar course in regard to Dancing and its incidence to the monograph by Mr. Elson, 1901. The remarks, which I have ventured to offer on the universality of the taste for Music, are scarcely less applicable to the cognate accomplishment, and I would also submit that here, too, personal intercourse with teachers and amateurs, many or most of whom would be in touch with the theatres, assisted the poet in becoming a master of terpsichorean lore.

IV

**CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE
PLAYS**



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE PLAYS

THE tables of contents of the successive editions of the plays are calculated to afford a misleading idea of the actual sequence and of the varied circumstances, which led to the choice of themes or topics. The apprenticeship of the poet to the service of the theatre was occupied by a progressively influential and perceptible hand in the revision or recast of a considerable body of extant production belonging to a dramatic school, which succeeded to that in vogue from the time of the earliest Tudors, and sought to substitute for the Latin academic piece and the religious drama or low comic interlude in the vernacular the coarse melodrama. Shakespear did not stand alone at the outset as an improver of the stage; Marlowe, Greene, and Peele, did their part; but they did not, so far as we know, traverse to any extent the rather large historical series, which constituted and should be ranked as Shakespear's dramatic *juvenilia*, not as they appear in the folio of 1623, but in their original stage or stages of recension, and to the two-part *Henry IV.* the *Merry Wives of Windsor* is regardable as a special corollary. The order of succession is to some extent correlative with the literary costume and atmosphere, which were governed by the time of life and the growth of observation and experience. The dramatic series has the appearance of falling automatically, so to speak, into their places, and in a large measure indicate consecutive suggestion. Setting aside the folio of 1623, we first get the Historical Series, including *Titus Andronicus*, but not *Henry VIII.* (which stands on special ground); secondly, the plays founded on Italian plots, starting with the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and intermittently ending with *Othello*; and to a certain extent concurrently the compositions on Roman history due to the study of North's Plutarch.

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Then there is the series of comedies, beginning with *Love's Labor's Lost*, alternating with tragedies, both based on very slender external foundations, and indebted for their excellence and permanent value to original treatment.

The contemporary texts are classifiable into three divisions: the quartos printed without the author's concurrence, and left unrevised; those similarly printed, and subsequently more or less corrected by him; and such as, having received his latest emendations and additions, first appeared in the folio of 1623.

A Table of the Plays, which may be approximately correct, follows:—

Titus Andronicus.—Slightly touched by Shakespear. Printed in 1594.

English Historical Plays: John to Richard III. Including the *Reign of Edward III.*, printed in 1596. This, in common with the rest of the series, was merely revised by the poet, and certain additions introduced. *King John* is mentioned by Meres in 1598 as Shakespear's. The dramatist did not see much worth adopting in the rough prior drama of 1591.

Roman Plays. Written between 1594 and 1608. *Antony and Cleopatra* forms a sequel to *Julius Cæsar*. The former was licensed for the press, May 20, 1608. *Coriolanus* appears to have been in hand in the same year, while he had at all events the plan of *Macbeth* before him. But none of this group, except *Titus Andronicus*, which appeared in 1594, and merely received some amendments from Shakespear, was printed at the time.

Timon of Athens.—One of the composite plays, perhaps the last of the series.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona.—We notice here the buoyancy of early authorship so conspicuous in *Love's Labor's Lost*.

The Comedy of Errors.—Only part-written by Shakespear.

Romco and Juliet.

Love's Labor's Lost, 1598.—Written just before Christmas, 1597.

Love's Labor Won, or *Much Ado about Nothing*.—Not printed till 1600, but mentioned by Meres in 1598.

All's Well that Ends Well.

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Merchant of Venice.—Licensed in 1598.

A Midsummer Night's Dream.—Written, as the *Merry Wives* to some extent was, with the dramas of Lyly in his mind's eye.

The Merry Wives of Windsor.—This play carried on the comic treatment of some of the historical pieces, where Falstaff was introduced, and at the same time brought back to some extent the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

As You Like It.—Licensed in 1600.

Hamlet.—Founded, it is to be presumed rather than affirmed, on an autecedent drama, of which there are casual fragmentary vestiges, perhaps on more than one, and on oral information. The topic was recommended by the Danish marriage of James VI.

The poet is here profounder, more sententious, more cynical, less florid and fantastic in his diction, and at the same time less picturesque and imaginative in a poetical sense.

Twelfth Night, 1602. —Written for the Middle Temple, and first performed there. An adaptation seems to have been exhibited at Court early in 1623. First printed in that year in the Folio.

Othello.—A survival of the once rather crucial question of the contrast of colour, of which we see so much made in the *Sonnets* and elsewhere. The play was presented in 1604, and preceded Jonson's *Masques of Blackness and Beauty* and the publication of Shakespear's *Sonnets*, where the physiological problem is discussed.

Measure for Measure.—Acted at Whitehall in 1604.

Lear.—Presented by the Globe company at Whitehall on St. Stephen's night, 1606.

Taming of the Shrew.—Licensed in 1607. First printed in 1623. Shakespear found the name Sly in the poor parent-play of 1594.

A Yorkshire Tragedy.—I think it probable that this may have proceeded, as Mr. Bertram Dobell has contended, from the pen of George Wilkins, and may possibly have been left by him unfinished, and received a few touches from Shakespear, who was then still residing in London. Wilkins died in the autumn of 1608.

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Troilus and Cressida.—Printed in 1609.

Pericles.—Augmented by Shakespear. There is a slight hint of the cognominal Athenian and of a reference to North's *Pistarch*. Twice printed in 1609.

Cymbeline.

Macbeth.—An outcome of the Scottish succession. See *Notes infra*.

Antony and Cleopatra.—Licensed in May, 1608.

A Winter's Tale.—Otherwise known as *A Winter Night's Vision* in contradistinction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play is attributable to 1610. It bears internal evidence of later work than the production just named.

The Tempest.—First printed in 1623.

Henry VIII.—First printed in 1623. Much of it is by another hand, possibly more than one.

V
NOTES



NOTES

∴ The subjoined illustrations and suggestions are merely offered as occasional and incidental memoranda.

I. PERSONAL HISTORY

P. 7. *Local grammar-school*.—In the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, iv., the scene between Sir Hugh Evans and William Page reads much like a recollection of Stratford school. The Christian name given to young Page is itself a point. Did Mr. Acton or Mr. Roche address him as Shakespear or as William? Mr. Jenkins was a little after his time as a pupil; but he may have immediately suggested the Welsh jargon.

P. 12. *Place of Shakespear's marriage*.—In Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines*, 1886, ii. 364, he discredits the traditional hearsay emanating from an unnamed old lady, who had heard in her childhood, and informed some one in 1862, that the poet and his wife were united at Luddington on the Avon, at that time a chapelry. But the chapel and its register have long disappeared.

P. 14. *Recollections of domestic incidents*.—See Notes to *Twelfth Night*, ii. 1 *infra*.

P. 19. *Travelling range*.—See Halliwell-Phillipps, *Visits of Shakespear's Company of Actors to the Cities and Towns of England*, 8^v, 1887. The visits were paid between 1597 and 1613, and extended over Kent, Sussex, Essex (Saffron Walden), Somersetshire, Devonshire, Leicestershire, Wiltshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Shropshire. The poet did not necessarily form part of the cast in all these excursions, probably in none of the later ones.

P. 30. *The Cliffs of Dover*.—The fourth act of *The Second Part of Henry VI.* opens in Kent, on the seashore near Dover, a possible recollection of the visit to that port in 1597.

Pp. 36-7. *Shakespear as an actor*.—It has been stated that the poet included in his list of impersonations that of Sejanus in Jonson's play of that name, produced in 1603, which involved Jonson in trouble, and in which, curiously enough, there had been a second hand, perhaps Chapman. But a perusal of the drama, apart from any supposed political reflections, leaves a sense of level dulness on the mind—at least on mine, and I cannot help feeling that Shakespear was unlucky in his choice or acceptance of parts, and must have viewed with relief

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the severance of his connection with a side of the pursuit ill-suited to his bent. In Jonson's two productions, where his friend was in the cast, there is, as Shakespear may have well felt, an absence of spring, subtlety, and brilliance.

I may refer the reader to the curious anecdote respecting the poet and the queen printed in *Shakespear's Library*, 1875, Part 2, l. 400-1; but it has much the air of a *ben trovato*.

P. 78. *Piked shoes*.—See my *Livery Companies*, 1892, p. 455, for a very curious extract from Stow on this subject.

P. 95. *Autographic remains*.—The Marlowes of Canterbury, who appear to have occupied a somewhat parallel social and educational position to the Shakespears, also employed a mark. See Ingram, *Christopher Marlowe and his Associates*, 1904, pp. 266-9.

P. 98. *Signature of the poet in Florio's Montaigne*.—While Sir F. Madden in his pamphlet, 1838, improperly completed the "W" of the Christian name, which in the original is faulty, in a facsimile prefixed to Dyce's Shakespear, 1875, the significant and material marks in the folds of the same letter are suppressed.

P. 106. —Dr. Young, Bishop of Rochester, seems to have appointed Spenser his secretary immediately on his election to the see, to which he was nominated only 31 Jan. 1577-8.

P. 129.—Thomas Greene the so-called cousin. There is an illustration of the lax way in which this term was formerly used, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, ii. 1:—

"Leon. Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

Beat. I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight."

Pp. 133-4. *Richard III. and Burbage*.—Exactly the same thing is related in a recent Life of the famous singer Garcia in reference to one of his distinguished pupils. But see p. 301 for the habitual identification by female spectators of the performers with the individuals. This surrender of personality is true art; the converse is more familiar.

P. 137. *Tarlton*.—In *Pigges Coranto*, 1642, the popular rhyme:—

"The King of France went up the hill—"

of which there are varying versions, is described as "Old Tarlton's Song." One Oliver Pygge published in 1589 a tract, containing Meditations on the Spanish Armada; if the title of the tract above-cited intends the same person, he was Tarlton's contemporary.

———*Tarlton's own way*.—Agreeably to the Horatian aphorism, it was also the late Mr. Toole's. I have seen him sing a humorous song on the stage with the ostensible copy held before him, and at the conclusion he turned the paper round to the house, and it exhibited only a caricature.

P. 141. *Robert Davenant*.—See a very interesting account of his friendship with Sir John Suckling the poet in my edition of Suckling.

1892, xxxiv.-v. Through such a channel the latter may have derived some particulars of Shakespear, for whom he entertained a great admiration. In a full-length portrait by Vandyke, formerly in the possession of the family, he is represented holding a copy of Shakespear's Works. This picture was seen by Aubrey at Suckling's sister Lady Southcott's house in Bishopsgate Street. It is the one engraved by Vertue.

Suckling marked his respect for Shakespear in a rather odd way by writing some supplementary stanzas to *Lucrece*.

P. 144. *Head of the Dramatist*.—The portrait, presumably also by Burbage, exhibiting the poet in his last moments, has the appearance of having been executed, while the dying man was propped up in bed.

The verses painted on a second board, and originally gilt, are as follow:—

"How speake thatte Browe soe pensive yet serene
The Incdde Teare juste startynge to thine cyne
Dost thou nowe dwelle onne Romeo's ill star'd love
Or doth the tortured Moore thy passion move
None so. Alasse no more shall phantasies creatures
Adumbrate or enshroude the Poetes Features
To realle Illes lvs Frame nowe falles a Preye
He feels approche the Ev'ninge of Lyffas Daye—
And e'er another Dawne arise to cheere
Lyfes busie Sonnes may droppe poore Wil Shakspeare
Sic cecinit Cygnus Avoniæ et obiit 23 Aprilis 1616 ÆT 52"

In Burbage's day there were special manuals of instruction in the art of engraving and gilding on various substances from 1583 onward.

P. 146. *Scarcity of biographical particulars*.—The purely casual or desultory manner, in which biographical points relative to our early writers arise, has been recently illustrated by the resemblance noted by an Annandale man to the physiognomy of the Scot of those parts in the portrait of Jonson, who told Drummond of Hawthornden in 1619 that his grandfather came from Carlisle, and (he thought) previously from Annandale. It were much to be desired, that we could recover some more intimate traits of Shakespear—his varied phases of expression, his speaking tones, his gesture, his features in gladness and in sorrow.

Pp. 176, 179. Clapham's *Narcissus*, 1591.—This poem may have suggested the very dull and foolish Twelfth-Night Merriment performed in the Hall of St. John's College, Oxford, in 1802. Comp. my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, pp. 89 and 163.

II. THE LYRICAL WORK

P. 176. *Venus and Adonis* and *Archbishop Whilgift*.—There does not appear to be a copy of either quarto, 1593 4, at Lambeth, pursuant to the special licence, and the question arises, whether the licentious

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cast of the poem led on inspection not only to the failure to retain it in the library, but to a partial suppression, since of the first only a single copy is traceable and of the second not more than three. The *Lucrece* of 1594 is almost equally rare, only six perfect copies having occurred to notice. The bibliographical history of other Elizabethan volumes, such as Chute's *Beauty Dishonoured*, 1593, has yet to be ascertained, where not more than a copy or two has come down to us, while of other books of a poetical character of the same period there is a fairly ample survival. Compare what I mention at p. 177 of the shortly subsequent action of Whitgift in respect to other equivocal publications.

Lucrece. Shakespear, in the edition of this poem published by himself in 1594, entitles it simply *Lucrece*. Why do the Editors presume to call it the *Rape of Lucrece*? Insufficient stress has been laid on the peculiar interest and significance of the Argument prefixed to this work. It was almost certainly written by Shakespear with a copy of North's Plutarch before him, and it is the sole attempt on his part to do anything of the kind, as well as his only prose essay. It is of course a mere rough abstract without any claim to thoughtful composition.

Apart from the treatment of the story as he found it related in books, the poet was apt to meet with the name as a printer's sign on the very numerous publications of Thomas Berthelet and Thomas Purfoot, sometimes accompanied by the woodcut representing *Lucretia Romana*; and this may have operated as a suggestion.

The story lingered fairly long in the poet's memory, and in *Twelfth Night*, written in 1602, we have the *Lucrece* knife and seal (ii. 5), as in *Macbeth*, ii. 1, written just about the same period, we meet with a second reference.

P. 189. *Sense of the prospect, which levels all distinctions*.—Comp. p. 79. The same vein of thought is found in *Measure for Measure*, iii. 3, and in *Cymbeline*, iv. 4.

P. 209.—I might have added the Smiths of Bidborough, Kent. Sir Thomas Smith published in 1605 two editions of his *Voyage and Entertainment into Russia*.

P. 220, *Note*.—Malone cut out of a document at Stratford the original signature of John Hall, Shakespear's son-in-law, and inserted it in his copy of the *Observations*, which did not accompany the other books to Oxford. But it has been since detached and restored.

P. 232. *Richard Grafton*.—It appears from a comparatively recent monograph by Mr. J. A. Kingdon, 1895, that Grafton and Thomas Poyntz, Citizens and Grocers of London, had suffered loss and danger, in common with Tyndale, Coverdale and others, in their exertions for the propagation of the Bible in English.

P. 309. *Quarto plays at Manchester*.—On inquiry of Mr. Guppy, curator of the John Rylands Library, that gentleman informs me that he is not aware of any such acquisition. Yet it was so reported.

Sonnets. -I. "From fairest creatures we desire increase."

So, in the Epistle before Greene's *Menaphon*, 1589, Nash calls Peele's *Arraignment of Paris*, 1584, his "first increase," i.e., offspring. This opening line touches the voluptuous side of cruelty; it is one, which Shakespear at thirty-one was more likely to write than Barnfield as a youth eleven years his junior.

Comp. the cognate sentiment in Sonnet 41:

"Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd"—

And, bearing in mind that the same ardent, pitiless, and almost libidinous, passion lies at the base of the *Lucretia*, we become at liberty to ascribe all three productions to one period and one bias.

V. "Those hours that with gentle work did frame."

Hours is a disyllable—*houres*.

XXIII. This, with Nos. 17, 29 and 80, seems to form a group of connected utterances of a more or less realistic stamp, approaching self-valuation variously couched.

XXIX. Comp. the line, rather redolent of a specious humility:

"Desiring this man's art and that man's scope"—

with what I say about the poetical rival at pp. 236-7. And, again, the serenade in *Cymbeline*, ii. 3, with the lines in the same stanza:—

"Like to the lark at break of day arising

From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate"—

where we have the *primum stamen* of the production in the play and an argument for the authorship of the Songs by the poet.

XLI. "... my seat forbear."

Read *thy suit*. The last two lines of the quatorzain are obscurely worded, and scarcely surrender to a first perusal, owing to the presence of three persons of the drama.

L. "How heavy do I journey on my way"—

In 1739 it was usual for those desirous of travelling from Glasgow to London to ride on horseback, and until they reached Grantham, there was no turnpike road. The whole traffic passed over a narrow causeway. Oliver's *History of the Holy Trinity Guild, Steaford*, 1837, p. 46. Shakespear's son-in-law Hall rode on horseback long distances—as much as 40 miles—to see distinguished patients; and the poet himself in his youth knew what it was to cover a good deal of ground afoot, as he seems to recollect in that little catch in *A Winter's Tale*, "Jog on, jog on, the footpath way." Did he and his two sureties trudge in 1682 from Stratford to Worcester on that matrimonial errand?

CVII. "And peace proclaims *olives* of endless age."

Read: "And peace proclaims an *olive* of endless age."

The text, as it stands, is neither sense nor metre, and the point seems to be that the new Stuart line represents a perpetual olive. A

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succession of olives would not answer to the context. In the Cambridge verses on Cromwell, 4^o, 1654, the Protector is described as *Oliva Paris*.

CXXVII. The undisciplined and immature power and taste bespeak early composition prior to the appearance of Pembroke and the Fittons on the scene. Mary Fitton, at all events, was a fair woman, and would not answer to the dark lady, who here and there crosses the stage, as it were, long before Jonson thought of his *Masque of Blackness*.

CLII. *In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn.*

I have suggested a side-look here to his own case and the possibility of the disclosure about 1596 of an intrigue in his absence between his wife and a third party, leading to a permanent rupture.

III. THE DRAMATIC WORK

ROMAN OR CLASSICAL PLAYS

(1594-1608)

The insinuations by Jonson, and possibly by others, of his want of scholarship, and the appearance in 1579 of the English version of Plutarch's *Lives*, were doubtless contributory agencies in leading Shakespear to turn his attention to a field, which he had so far only slightly touched in his lyrics and perhaps in *Titus Andronicus*. The second edition of the Plutarch came in 1595 from the press of his friend and countryman Richard Field, who had published the *Venus and Adonis* two years prior; it is impossible to say with confidence, that such was the case; yet it is an extremely plausible idea that the poet, frequenting the shop or office of Field, may have seen there the book, of which he has made so free an use, and even have had an early copy given to him. Field brought out another impression in 1603, which would be quite early enough for the plays, and nearer to the period of their composition, while, on the other hand, the commercial dealings of the poet with Field do not seem to have extended beyond 1596. The point is, after all, of the slightest possible consequence; but undue stress has been laid on it by one or two Shakespearian students; and I must go so far as to plead (i.) that the use by Shakespear of an edition of the *Lives* printed in 1612 is barred by the generally admitted circumstance that at that date the poet had completed the series, as well as *The Tempest*, and was preparing to leave London for ever; (ii.) that he had turned his attention, at least in an editorial capacity, to this class of subject—perhaps as early as 1593-4, when *Titus Andronicus* came from the press; and that in *Lucrèce*, 1594, the Argument appears to be derived from Plutarch, where he also got the name *Leonato* in *Much Ado about Nothing*; (iii.) that before 1601 *Julius Caesar* was in hand; and (iv.) that early in 1608 *Antony and Cleopatra* was entered at Stationers' Hall, while in *Coriolanus* there is the apparent chronological clue in the passage reminiscent of the death

of the writer's mother in September, 1608. There has been a disposition to suppose that Shakespear used for the last drama Fulbecke's *Historical Collection*, 1601. I must take this opportunity of noting, that I see no sufficient ground for attaching importance to any relations between Shakespear and Vautrollier the printer in Blackfriars, who died early in 1588, and whose daughter married Richard Field.

The present series (including *Timon of Athens*) may be regarded as the earliest systematic and sustained attempt to place on the English stage a view of the course of ancient history in a more or less popular and attractive form. The scheme was doubtless suggested in chief measure by the appearance of the English Plutarch and partly by certain less elaborate and less technically constructed pieces on classical themes, in the nature of interludes, which had multiplied during the reign of Elizabeth.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It may be useful to state in respect to this drama, first, the known facts; secondly, the probabilities. The former are:—

1. That a piece called *Titus and Vespasian* was performed by no fewer than three companies between April 11, 1591, and January 15, 1593-4, the name Vespasian being that, not of the Roman emperor, but of a *dramatis persona*, and Titus signifying Titus Andronicus.

2. That a German version of the play appeared, in which the form was retained.

3. That in January or February, 1593-4, the play was altered, *Titus Andronicus* substituted for *Titus* and the name of Vespasian withdrawn.

4. That on February 6, 1593-4, the play, as altered, was licensed to John Danter (with a ballad on the subject), under the hands of both the Wardens and of Master Woodcock respectively, as "A Noble Roman Historie of Tytus Andronicus," and printed accordingly, 4°, 1594, without any author's name.

5. That it was republished with immaterial variations in 1600 and 1611.

6. That between 1611 and 1623 it received the addition of a new scene (Act iii., Scene 2) of a suspiciously Shakespearean complexion, apart from other touches by the same tell-tale hand, especially one in Act ii. Sc. 1, where two lines spoken by Demetrius not only recall the forty-first Sonnet, but a passage in *Henry VI.*, Part I., Act v., Sc. 3.¹

7. That it was admitted into the first folio of 1623, from which the so-called Doubtful Plays are otherwise excluded, as an unquestioned work of the dramatist.

8. That it is enumerated by Meres in 1598 among Shakespear's works.

9. That Edward Ravenscroft, a dramatist of the later Stuart era, who altered the play in 1686, had heard that it was revised by Shakespear. He had apparently not heard who wrote it.

The probabilities are:—

1. That *Titus Andronicus* was not by an author living, when it was

¹ See both printed *supra* in ch. xii.

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licensed under new auspices in 1593-4, and that Shakespear had so far no hand in it beyond an editorial one.

2. That it was not, from its nature, an anonymous work of Baron.

3. That Jonson, when he alludes to it in his *Bartholomew Fair*, first acted in 1614, was unacquainted with the circumstances attendant on the alterations in the play, when he couples it with Kyd's *Jeronimo*.

4. That Shakespear was most probably in London, when Marlowe died, and we know from the reference in *As You Like It*, that he was affected by the event, as it is the sole affair of the kind, outside his own family, which he permitted himself to notice in print.

5. That the text employed and spoken by Henslowe's companies demanded at Shakespear's hands sufficient castigation to render it at least as much his work as the original writer's.

6. That the Editor of the 1623 folio had the use of a copy of one of the quartos—probably that of 1611—with the supplementary scene inserted in MS. in its place.

Altogether the evidence leans very strongly indeed toward the Shakespearian editorship of this drama, as we possess it, especially in the Folio. The original authorship is a question, on which we are perhaps not entitled to speak with equal confidence, more particularly as we have no text of the parent play before us, to enable us to discriminate between the composition as it left the writer's hands and as it presents itself in the 4^o of 1594. On the other hand, no second plausible candidate for the attribution suggests itself, unless it were Jonson, who, while in his *Bartholomew Fair* he sneers at that style of writing, received payments in 1601-2 for additions to the *Spanish Tragedy*; and the recent death of Marlowe (June, 1593) afforded the opportunity for recension. If we may believe Greene's *Groat's worth of Wit*, 1592, Shakespear had for some time been a trusted hand in that kind of work, and the supplementary matter first printed in 1623 makes for his editorial association with the play.

I think that, on the whole, the most judicial exposition of the case is that to be read in Halliwell-Phillips, *Outlines*, 1886. But he does not draw attention to the significant parallelism pointed out above. The part of Andronicus, taken by Edward Alleyn, must have been almost the earliest prominent impersonation which was undertaken by him. Shakespear at this early stage seems to have worked in some measure with Henslowe, although he subsequently and finally associated himself with the Burbages.

The authors of *Cambysses* and the *Spanish Tragedy* may be treated as the foster parents of Marlowe. *Tamburlaine* overflows with the same crude and vulgar rant.

TIMON OF ATHENS

Shakespear's play seems to have been written by some one independently of the academic production first printed by Dyce, which is by no means without merit, and is preferable to Shakespear's in one leading respect, that it represents Timon as squandering his own wealth, instead of that borrowed from others; which necessarily forfeits our sympathy with the central person of the drama on the score

of ingratitude. But it is a prolix and tedious piece. Both authors, whoever they were (I have heard George Wilkins, who died in August, 1608, named as one), went to Plutarch and others for their notion about Timon, under which name there were living, more than a century apart, two individuals not wholly dissimilar in character. I think it beyond doubt that this is one of the Shakespearean series belonging to the group of recast texts, and that the Stratford poet only appears here and there, where he deemed retouching expedient. We have no earlier copy than that of 1623. But it was probably in existence prior to *As You Like It*, and in the "churlish philosopher" Epimantus we seem to recognize a crude conception of Jaques, himself a somewhat unfelicitous mouthpiece for dry caustic humour.

In the old *Timon* (*Shakespeare's Library*, 1875, part ii. vol. 2, p. 452) it may be incidentally noted that Gelasimus says:—

"What, shall wee traunyle through that citty, where
The candles walke, and catter play on the fiddle?"

The character and passage do not occur in Shakespeare's play; perhaps there may be some allusion to the nursery rhyme of—

"Hey! diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle—"

the first line of which some make a corruption from the Greek. See Halliwell (*Popular Rhymes*, 1849, p. 271).

ENGLISH HISTORICAL SERIES

(*King John to Richard III.*)

KING JOHN

Shakespeare had before him the rough drama, published anonymously in 1591, and said to have been performed by the Queen's Players sundry times in the City of London. We have the authority of Meres for believing that the text revised by Shakespeare was in existence in, if not before, 1598, unless Meres confounded the two pieces; and on the other hand there is the anterior note of time in the presumed allusion to the death of Hamnet Shakespeare in 1596, for the insertion of which, however, we seem to have no means of precise chronological fixture, as no text of the play, as we possess it, prior to the Folio of 1623, is known.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "To make a more requital of your love."

Under 1579 in the North Accounts occurs: "Dec. 19. The polers of my hoppground in part of a more soon . . . x^s."

More is the equivalent of the Scottish or Celtic word *maior* for greater = Lat. *major*.

Act. ii., Sc. 2. "Look where three farthings goes."

There were two types of the silver coin of Elizabeth of this value, more probably the hammered variety was the one, which the poet had in view.

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Act v., Sc. 7. "*P. Hen.* . . . his pure brain
(Which some suppose the soul's frail dwelling house)."

This, which is a Shakespearean interpolation, strikes me as a most extraordinary proof of the poet's insight, standing in place of advanced scientific knowledge, since he here clearly announces his own hypothesis, couched (as usual) in general terms, as to the identity of the soul with the brain, although he did not go so far as to trace that of the brain with the blood, nor was it necessary for him as a dramatist to do so. I elsewhere allude to the ostensible reminiscence of the death of the poet's son in 1596.

HENRY IV., PART I.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*2 Carrier.* . . . this house is turned upside down, since Robin Ostler died.

"*1 Car.* Poor fellow! never joyed, since the price of oats rose; it was the death of him."

The interest of this passage is in a manner considerable, for the scene laid at Rochester seems to be founded on the poet's first experience at Shoreditch as a servant of James Burbage, and this Robin was in Burbage's employment previous to the arrival of Shakespear in London as a permanence. In 1633, to guard against the engrossing practice, by which chandlers bought up stocks, to re-sell at an arbitrary profit, the Star Chamber fixed the charge of oats at sixpence a peck Winchester measure.

"*2 Car.* Why, they will allow us ne'er a jordan, and then we leak in your chimney."

This passage is very curious, because to *leak* is the exact English equivalent of the French *faire l'eau*; and the French do not employ the latter in such a sense, while we say to *make water*=to leak. In a French satirical poem, almost contemporary with Shakespear, by Melin de Saint Gellais, called *Folie aux Hosteliers*, there is this singular coincidence: "*Ils ont loi sans vous offenser, Ne trouvant le pôt a pisser, De pisser a la cheminée.*"

Sc. 3. "*Poins.* How the [fat] rogue roared." [*Exeunt.*]

Halliwel-Phillips owned an unique fragment of an edition of this play, held by him to have preceded the ordinary known one of 1598, and he took occasion to remark, that it is the only existing record of the true reading in Poins's speech: "How the *fat* rogue roa'd!"

Sc. 4. "*P. Hen.* What manner of man, an' it like your majesty!"

Too high a praise cannot be given to this subtly humorous impersonation by Falstaff of the King and his reference to himself as the sole eligible associate of the prince. The passage is a masterpiece of invention and wit.

"*P. Hen.* Hark, how hard he fetches breath: search his pockets."

This is where discovery is made of Falstaff's tavern-bill and of the disproportion of ale and bread. But it may be worth while to indicate

a not unlikely source for the humorous notion in one of the *Merry Tales of Skelton*, informing us, "how the Welshman did desire Skelton to aid him in his suit to the king for a patent to sell drink." See Hazlitt's *Studies in Jocular Literature*, 1890, p. 170.

Eleven men in buckram. I have seen it suggested, that Shakespear, in making buckram the dress, may have been thinking of the attire of the morris-dancers. See my *Faiths and Folklore*, 1905, v. *Mumming*.

HENRY IV., PART II.

Dramatis Personæ. Lord Bardolph.

It strikes me as a breach of propriety in a dramatic series, where there was the opportunity for revision, to give the same name to two such different characters as Lord Bardolph and the Bardolph of the *Merry Wives*; and it is almost worse with the two Jaques in *As You Like It*. The form *Bardolph* seems to be derived from the Fr. *Bardouil*.

Induction. "The blunt monster with uncounted heads."

See Warton's *H.E.P.*, 1871, iii., 172, where he refers to this passage, but speaks of Shakespear describing Rumour with *many tongues*. *Blunt* may be here interpreted to signify plain-spoken.

Act i., Sc. 2. "Fal. Sirrah, you giant . . ."

Falstaff addresses his diminutive page, and speaks ironically. I suggest *Sirrah*, *young giant*.

"Fal. . . . Where is Bardolph?"

See a long note in my *Proverbs*, 1907, p. 116.

Act ii., Sc. 4. Where Pistol is made to say (Globe edit. 1895): "*Si fortune me tormenta, sperato me contenta*," which is absolute nonsense, he may be meant to blunder. Anyhow, the poet found the quotation in Copley's *Wits, Fits, and Fancies*, 1595; and the correct form is: "*Si la fortuna me tormenta, la speranza me contenta*." For Copley either gave it wrongly, or Mr. Collier (*Bibl. Cat.*, 1865, i. 156) has not accurately transcribed the passage from the ed. of 1614, which he employed.

Act iii., Sc. 2. "Shallow. O, Sir John, do you remember since we lay all night in the windmill in St. George's Fields?"

The Windmill stood in 1632 next to the Falcon Inn in Southwark, and may have been the one intended by the poet. See *Surrey Arch. Coll.* xvi., 78. The Mill is mentioned as early as 1113, when it was given with the hide of land and other appurtenances to the monks of Bermondsey.

"Shallow. . . . I remember at Mile-end Green, when I lay at Clement's Inn,—I was then Sir Dagonet in Arthur's show."

This show was presented before Queen Elizabeth in 1587-8 under the superintendence of Hugh Offley, Sheriff of London. Was our poet there, and did he take a part—that which he assigns to Shallow? See Black's *History of the Leathersellers*, 1871, p. 65.

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Act v., Sc. 1. "*Davy*. Yes, sir. Here is now the smith's *note*."

Note=invoice, which is still the sense in French and other languages.

Act v., Sc. 4. "*Doll*. Come, you thin thing; come, you rascal!"

The sense of *rascal* in this passage is probably well understood; it is a term used in the *Book of St. Albans* to signify a lean animal, and again in *A C. Mery Tulya*, 1528, repr. 1887, folio ix. verso.

HENRY V.

The French contained here may have been within the poet's competence, or it may have been revised for him by friends—perhaps by Thomas Quiney, Thomas Combe, or any one else at hand. But there is no occasion to presume any profound knowledge of the language.

Dramatis Personæ. Bardolph.

See Note to K. Henry IV., Part 2, *supra*.

Chorus. See *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Act i., Sc. 1. *The scuffling and unquiet times*.

In the *Northumberland Household Book*, 1512, a section is occupied by directions for the diet to be observed on the Mondays and Saturdays throughout Lent, which are described as the Scuffling Days. The expression *scuffled eggs* seems to be of the same origin. The sense of the word in the play may be a secondary one, that of *stirring up* or *exciting*.

Act i., Sc. 2. *Sunless treasures*.

Should we not read *sunless* treasures? The sense appears to require property withdrawn from the light of the sun rather than wealth of measureless extent. It is a peculiarly Shakespearean turn of expression.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*Nym*. . . . I will *do* as I may."

Should not we read *die*?

Sc. 3. "*Quick*. . . . and a' babbled of green fields."

This is the famous emendation of Theobald, 1728. The line does not occur in the 4ths of 1600 and 1608. Comp. p. 116.

Lupton, in the third book of his *Notable Things*, first published in 1579, writes under the section devoted to *Death-Omens*: "If the forehead of the sick wax red, and his brows fall down, and his nose wax sharp and cold, . . . if he pulls straws or the cloaths of his bed, . . . these are almost certain tokens of death." It is almost impossible to believe that this passage was not directly borrowed by Shakespear, where he makes Mrs. Quickly employ the identical figures and sentiment.

"*Boy*. Yes, that a' did, and said they were devils incarnate."

A recollection of Lodge's tract, which Shakespear uses again, when

he makes Gobbo, in the *Merchant of Venice*, refer to Shylock as "a very devil incarnation."

"Quick. . . but then he was rheumatic."

A malapropism for romantic.

HENRY VI.

See Hunter's *New Illustrations*, ii. 63, where the original drama, which Shakespear altered, is supposed to have been written in 1587. Mr. Fleay associates with much confidence the names of Greene, Marlowe, Peele, and Lodge, with these dramas, and leads us to believe that Shakespear converted the aggregate raw material into what we have in the folio. This is of course pure speculation.

In 1602 Thomas Pavier the stationer entered the *first and second parts of the Contention* as the *first and second parts of Henry VI.*; but the same person published the *Whole Contention* in 1619. *Henry VI.*, as we now have it, first appeared in the Folio of 1623.

This series has awakened perhaps a larger amount of criticism and disagreement than any of the dramas included in the Folio of 1623. There is no doubt, that plays on the abnormally long and eventful reign were in course of performance at the theatres, even before Shakespear commenced his labours as an editor, and after all the speculations on the subject we seem to have to fall back on the general proposition, that the poet is answerable only for occasional interpolations and amendments, for which we have to rely on internal evidence, in the Second and Third Parts, the First remaining in its original crudity, and gaining admission by way of completeness, although the period covered is replete with stirring historical incidents, capable of seizure by a dramatist.

The ascertainable points regarding this sequential triplet are:—

1. That the third part, and probably the second, were in existence and on the stage during the lifetime of Robert Greene, who travestied a line in the former, as if it had been within his knowledge more or less from the pen of some one, to whom he was not friendly;
2. That these two parts were successively published in 1594 as the *First Part of the Contention* and in 1595 as the *True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, in the former case without any indication of a place of performance, in the latter as played by the Earl of Pembroke's servants;
3. That the complete tripartite drama was first printed in 1623, the whole from an independent MS., of which the earliest portion had not previously appeared in print, while the text of the second and third varied from those published in 1594-5 in certain particulars;
4. That the Chorus to Shakespear's *Henry V.* alludes to the earlier annals of Henry VI. having been often shown on the stage, but in what precise shape we are left in doubt;
5. That this Chorus does not occur in the *Famous Victories*, and was doubtless an addition from another pen by way of introducing the theatrical representation of the events of the succeeding reign.

The most plausible, if not most probable, solution of the difficulty attendant on the postponement of a committal to type of the First Part

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till 1623, and of the discrepancy between the state of the text and that of the sequels in the Folio, is, that the play or plays dealing with the opening years of the reign of Henry VI. did not exist in any form commending itself to Shakespear's attention, that he hunted his editorship to the salient features in the Second and Third Parts, as they occur in the posthumous collective edition, and that a text of Part I. was subsequently derived from some MS. source to supply the gap between the marriage of Henry V. and the events, which immediately followed. The copies, from which the Second and Third Parts were published in 1594-5 with marks of a revising hand, have served to furnish better readings than those found in the Folio and *vice versa*; but for the First Part there is no alternative resource; and the question arises, whether the terms of the Chorus at the end of *Henry V.* do not imply one of two things, an absence at that time of any MS. of the First Part or a disinclination, on the part of Shakespear or the players, to include it in the series, although the writer has judiciously laid a fair proportion of the scene on English ground.

PART I.

Dramatis Personæ.—It is a remark applicable to this and all the other plays in all the editions, that the names and descriptions are given in an illiterate and slovenly way. For instance, in the piece immediately concerned the Maid of Orleans is introduced as *Jean la Pucelle*.

Act ii., Sc. 2. *O, for a Muse of fire.*

F. W. in a MS. note on a form of receipt of the time of Henry VIII. in reference to the word *feir* for *fire* quotes Chatterton: "O for a spryte alle feir!" and remarks that the passage or phrase is merely Shakespear's altered.

PART II.

Act i., Sc. 3. "*Duch.* . . . Though in this place most master wear no breeches."

Compare note on *As You Like It*, iii., 1.

Act i., Sc. 3. "*Queen Margaret.* Thy sale of offices, . . . would make thee quickly *hop* without thy head," and just below the Duchess of Gloucester exclaims:—

"Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in your face."

The writer has in either case transferred to the highest life the manners of the lowest. It may be just worth noting that Hall the historian makes the Duke of York refer to Queen Margaret as "a scolding woman, whose only weapons are her tongue and her nails."

As we do not accurately know when this play received its present

form, it becomes difficult to decide, whether a passage in the old *Taming of a Shrew*, 1594:—

“Hands off I say, and get you from this place,
Or I will set my ten commandments in your face”—

(*Shakespeare's Library*, 1875, part 2, p. 502) is entitled to priority.

Act ii., Sc. 4. “*Duch.* My shame will not be shifted with my sheet—”

Note the inner sense so conspicuous throughout the dramatic series, more especially as the poet's concern in the play has been canvassed.

Act iii. For a misapprehension on the part of Shakespeare in regard to Duke Humphrey, see *Antiquary*, 1907, p. 214.

Act iv., Sc. 1. “*Suff.* Thy name affrights me, in whose sound is death.”

Suffolk refers to Walter Whitmore, and must be understood to use the old form *Water* for *Walter*. In the *Fests of the Widow Edyth*, 1573, one of the characters is Water Smyth. See my *Old English Jest Books*, 1864-6, iii. 82, 108. The tract in question first appeared in 1525, and at the end we have: “Finis. Quod Waterius Smyth.”

Act iv., Sc. 7. “*Cade.* . . . thou hast caused printing to be used. . . .”

So in *Sir John Oldcastle*, 1600, a library of printed books is given to a person of the drama. These anachronisms were habitual.

PART III.

For an account of the costly funeral expenses in connection with the removal of the body of the king from the Tower to Chertsey, and its interment there, see Brayley and Britton's *Surrey*, ii. 167.

RICHARD III.

The play of *Buckingham* was acted at the Rose Theatre by the Earl of Sussex's servants in 1593. As it is not otherwise known, we cannot tell, whether it served the poet for his own drama, or was a piece relating to the second Duke, beheaded in 1521. The play, to which Heywood wrote a Prologue and Epilogue, printed among his *Pleasant Dialogues and Drammas*, 1637, was perhaps an abridgment or adaptation, as the leading part is said to have been taken by “a young witty lad.” Heywood states that he was interested in the performance; not improbably he prepared it for some juvenile entertainment.

Act v., Sc. 3.

“*Ratcliff.* My lord; 'tis I. The early village cock
Hath twice done salutation to the morn.”

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Read *Clock*. In Chaucer (*Nonne Prestes Tale*) we have :

"Wel sikerer was his crowying in his logge,
Then is a clok or an abbay orologge."

And Browne (*Brit. Past*, i. 4) writes :

"By this had chanticleere, the village-clocke,
Bidden the good-wife for her Maide to knocke :"

The sense is, that chanticleer served the village for a timepiece, which was otherwise deficient. The words are spoken in the vicinity of Market-Bosworth.

In a play, where the king is the central figure almost throughout, and where his personal prowess and natural character are brought forward into conspicuous relief in the closing scene at Bosworth, it is important to have before us as clear a conception as possible of the physical aspect of Richard in relation to his alleged humped back ; and the reader or editor may advantageously refer to a document printed by Robert Davies (*Extracts from the Municipal Records of York*, 1843, p. 220) and the note, which embodies the evidence of a second contemporary of the king (John Rous). The latter does not specify a humped back, but a disparity in the height of the shoulders, the left one being lower than the right. The other witness adduced by Davies, William Burton, schoolmaster of St. Leonard's Hospital, terms Richard "a crookebake."

The popular legend about the Children in the Wood and its association with the murder of the two princes in the Tower had in 1595 assumed the form of a story localized in Norfolk, where it was, in a ballad still extant, related of a gentleman in that county, and the abuse of the trust reposed by him in his brother. We have only reprints of the Elizabethan production, of which Shakespear apparently made no use.

As regards the rather hackneyed allusion to the strawberries reared in the garden at Ely Place, it may be sufficient to refer to my *Old Garden Literature*, 1887, p. 139, adding, that the residence was in Shakespear's time in the possession of the Hattons, although at the period, when the scene is laid, it was doubtless the London hotel of the Bishops of Ely.

Act ii., Sc. 3. Where the writer alludes to the lady, that would not be a queen for all the mud of Egypt, he seems to have recollected a passage and a phrase in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where the queen speaks of Nilus' mud.

Act iv., Sc. 5. *Sir Christopher Urswick*.

A foreigner and a priest, and a Bachelor of Divinity. He was appointed Chaplain to Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, mother of the future Henry VII., and was employed as a confidential agent by the countess and her relatives at the close of the brief reign of Richard. The dramatist represents him as in the service of Lord Stanley. This ecclesiastic changed his name to Bainbridge, became Abbot of Abingdon, Bishop of Durham, and, subsequently to 1485, Archbishop of York. Ob. 1514.

RICHARD II.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*Duke of York*. . . Report of fashions in proud Italy,

Whose manners still our tardy apish nation
Limps after in base imitation."

The writer probably had in his mind, when he set down this passage, the title-page (nothing more) of a dull puritanical tract by W. R., probably William Rankins, entitled: "The English Ape, the Italian Imitation, the Foote-Steppes of Fraunce," &c., 1588. Dekker, in *Old Fortunatus*, 1600, referring to Compliment, describes him as "apish, childish, and Italianate," and in his *Notable Discovery of Cosenage*, 1591, Greene similarly remarks: "I haue English thoughts, not a deuill incarnate because I am Italianate." Elsewhere, the Duke of Norfolk, says Shakespear:—

"Retir'd himself to Italy;
And there at Venice gave
His body to that pleasant country's earth."

But a different view of the matter presents itself in my *Venetian Republic*, 1900, ii. 583.

HENRY VIII.

See *post*.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

Act i., Sc. 2. *Dialogue between Julia and Luella*.

Note the technical details of music. But the speakers were Italians, who might be supposed to be more conversant with these *minutæ*.

Fr. *Mignon* is used here for *dear* in the form *minion*, which subsequently acquired a very different sense.

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

Plot. Numerous analogues and prototypes have been from time to time pointed out. Of course it is an ancient idea. But see my *Warton*, 1871, i. 275. The piece, as published among Shakespear's works, strikes one as a tiresome, wiredrawn farce, of which the poet may be responsible only for certain touches, which stand out from the prevailing commonplace dialogue and sentiment in high relief. The whole action is circumscribed within a single day.

Take, as probable interpolations by Shakespear:

Act ii., Sc. 2. *Adr.* . . .

"For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
A drop of water in the breaking gulf.
And take unmingled thence that drop again—"

———*Ant. S.* . . . "In Ephesus I am but two hours old—"

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But the whole scene, from the entrance of the two women, is debatable.

A "History of Error," which reads like an earlier drama on the same lines, appears to have been exhibited at Hampton Court in 1577. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, v. *Error*.

The phrase *comedy or play of errors* became proverbial. See "Meeting of Gallants at an Ordinary," 1604, &c. Comp. *Alexander & Lodwick* in *Manual*, 1892, in v. and a note under *Cymbeline*.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

The edition of 1597 is imperfect; the first text with any pretensions to accuracy is that of 1599, where the play is said on the title to be "newly corrected, augmented, and amended" — doubtless by the author.

The interest in the subject had induced a stationer on the 5th August, 1596, to register "a newe ballad of Romeo and Juliet."

My grandfather Hazlitt, in his *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, 1817, notices the objection offered to the youth of the hero and heroine; but indeed the poet has been true here to local costume, since he was portraying the manners of a more southern people, where women arrive at maturity earlier than among ourselves, and where, besides, it would have been treated as contrary to etiquette for the lovers to meet privately prior to the nuptials. Such interviews as thus took place were therefore apt to be clandestine.

In 1869 Mr. F. W. Cosens printed a translation from Lope de Vega of the *tragi-comedy of Castelrines y Monteses*, supposed to be an analogue of Shakespear's play. But there appears to have been an earlier version in 1770. More recently an American gentleman has entered into the question of the sources of this play, which were, no doubt, Broke and Painter (using Boajstuan), and he has called attention to a Dutch dramatic composition on the subject by Jacob Struys written about 1630, where there is a feeble dilation of the story.

Dramatis Personæ. *Mercutio*. This name seems to be taken from Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, 1566-7, ii., 221.

Act iii., Sc. 5. "Cap. Hang thee, young baggage—"

This is only one of too numerous instances, where the poet neglects and violates propriety of diction and costume, and panders to the gods. Even in the case of a purely English audience, and laid in England, such and even worse language was not fit; but, applied to a noble Italian lady, especially by her father, and by the Nurse to Romeo, it was of course simply preposterous.

—"Some say the lark and loathed toad changed eyes—"

That is to say, in the popular fancy, the ill-favoured eye of the lark would better become the toad and *vice versa*. There are analogous sayings respecting the adder and the blindworm and the partridge and the woodcock. Bishop Warburton's note, copied into the editions, amounts to nothing. Comp. my *Proverbs*, 1907, pp. 245, 246.

LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST.

This comparatively weak and crude play was, no doubt, written almost immediately prior to its performance before the queen at the Christmas immediately preceding its publication (according to the terms of the peculiarly authoritative title-page of 1598), and was, subsequently to presentation, corrected and augmented by the author, who is most probably—almost certainly the hand, which has introduced any changes and additions, and duplicated in one place inadvertently a passage. What farther makes for personal interposition is, that on the title-page of the play, as first printed in 1598, the orthography of the name corresponds with the *second* form adopted by the poet in his authentic signatures, and differs from that found in the other quartos as altered, in the folios, in the *Sonnets*, and in the *Poems* of 1640.

The poet, when he had before him the yet unprinted MS. not only committed the above-named oversight, but either left other errors of the copyist uncorrected, or made final autographic changes in such a way as to be unintelligible to the printer. In one extant copy of the 4^o of 1598 there is an indication of the presence of the poet, when a portion of the impression had been worked, in a very material restoration of the sense. See Dyce's 3rd ed., ii. 249.

Shakespear seems, when he wrote the passages, where Holofernes appears, to have come fresh from contact with one of the numerous preceptors to be then found in London, by no means necessarily Florio, but rather a professional school-master like Richard Mulcaster, who deemed that he had a dramatic gift, and superintended the theatrical exhibitions of the St. Paul's boys, who were known as Mulcaster's Children.

Love's Labor's Lost was acted by the King's Company in or before January, 1605, and again at Southampton House in the same year.

The character of Don Adriano de Armado may have received a touch or so from an unique pamphlet of the time called the *Rudonantes of Captain Viques*, 1591, which was not, I believe, known to exist, till I met with a copy in the library of Peterborough Cathedral. It may be further pointed out that in this early drama the author betrays his contact, in the letters printed as part of the text, with a book by William Fulwood, called *The Enemy of Idleness*, 1568, of which there were several later impressions in Shakespear's lifetime, and two just about the date, when the present play was in hand, namely, in 1593 and 1598.

In the list of *Dramatis Personæ*, the names of Biron and Holofernes suggest the remarks (1) that, if the poet intended the Duc de Biron of the time, the portrait is a strange caricature, and if he did not, the adoption of the name of a prominent French statesman strikes one as injudicious. It is worse than the Oldcastle and Fastolfe case, for there at all events the individuals were not living; (2) that Holofernes is a name found in two earlier dramatic productions, 1556 and 1572. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, in v. The editors lay the accent on the second syllable of Biron, and the metre seems to require it; but the pronunciation involved is false. The original form of the French name was *Biron*.

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There is no mention of any visit of the Duc de Biron of history to London prior to 1601, when he had quarters at Crosby Place, Bishopsgate, not long before his execution, and too late to have suggested the name to the dramatist. He was of course a conspicuous public character long before, yet hardly in the way, which the play portrays. The inconsistency culminates here in the line where the French duke is made to allude figuratively to "Love's Tyburn," as to a London locality, with which he was familiar.

Act i., Sc. 2. *The dancing horses.*

The celebrity of this famous animal long survived him; for he is referred to in a French version of Apuleius, printed at Antwerp, 8°, 1633. *Longaville.*

Why should this form be adopted? The proper and only one is *Longueville*. There is much need of improvement under this head in many places.

Act i., Sc. 2. "*Biron.* Lady, I will commend you to mine own heart."

A Gallicism. *Own* is not required, and destroys the rhythm.

Act iv., Sc. 1. "*Thou canst not hit it.*"

This is imitated in *Wily Beguiled*, 1606, where we also meet with recollections of the Shakespearean incident of the Jew robbed by his daughter, of the moonlight scene, where Lorenzo and Jessica converse, and of the lover, who carves the name of his mistress on the bark of trees. The author of *Wily Beguiled* had evidently seen or read the three plays where these episodes occur: *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*. Comp. Chappell's *Popular Music*, 239.

Act iv., Sc. 2. "*Hol. . . Venegia, Venegia.*"

The saying seems to be traceable back to an Italian collection of proverbs, published in 1535. See Molmenti, *Vita Privata di Venezia*, 1908, *parte terza*, p. 87, note. The Venetian form *Venegia* requires the cognate one *pregia* instead of the *pretia* of the Editors.

Act iv., Sc. 3. "*Jaq.* God give you good morrow, master person."

Person for *Parson* is usual enough. In Luke Shepherd's Dialogue, printed about 1548, the form is *Mast Person*. The older spelling is the more correct, as the parson was and is the representative of the congregation before the Almighty.

Ibid. "*Hol.* Good old Mantuan—"

The *Eclogues* of Battista Spagnuoli of Mantua was a book read in schools in the poet's day, and may well have been seen by him at Stratford. The Latin text was constantly reprinted.

Act v., Sc. 2. *The chain were longer and the letter short.*

Surely *shorter* is preferable—and right.

—Song between Spring and Winter.

This beautiful lyric is a striking contrast to the main text, and suggests later composition.

The word *squire*, which is found in this play for *squarc*, and which is in Mr. Bartlett's Concordance entered under *squier*, occurs in the Shakespearean sense in the English version of Bloome's *Architecture*, 1608.

We remark in this play the almost torrential cataract bursting from an imagination of boundless wealth, and revelling in its own amazing ebullience. The dramatist had studied Lyly's *Euphues* with advantage, but he uses little more than the cue.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

Much Ado about Nothing exhibits the dramatist's great advance in the art of composition and dialogue since the appearance of the *Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, where the action is usually vivacious, but with a vast difference.

Dramatis Personæ. Leonato, Governor of Messina. Possibly the *Leonatus* of Plutarch. The poet might have his 1595 North before him just now. But the name was to be found in Harington's *Ariosto*, 1591, and Sydney's *Arcadia*, 1590. Comp. my *Shakespeare's Library*, 1876, Part I., iii. 82 *et seqq.*

Beatrice. The certainly fascinating and piquant character of this lady, while she may strike us as rather too profound for a great lady of the day, was not at all improbably based on a real person, for that there were women of rank with similar traits, striking the worldliest among us as with all their gaiety and broad fun delightfully pure at heart, with a fair allowance for the temper and feeling of the time, the *anecdota* of Sir Nicholas Lestrangle of Hunstanton furnish repeated proofs. These stories are merely such as Lestrangle noted down from hearsay or otherwise; but they carry their moral and their value as parallels:—

"Sir Henry Yelverton's lady us'd to say of anyone that was a widower, and had a son to inherit his estate, and desir'd a second wife, that nobody would have him he was so sun-burnt."

"Mrs. Ratcliffe, an old courtier in Queen Elizabeth's time, told a Lord, whose conversation and discourse she did not like, that his wit was like a custard, nothing good in it but the sop, and when that was eaten, you might throw away the rest." [Mis. or rather Mistress Ratcliff here mentioned was Margaret Ratcliffe of Ordsdale, Bucks, Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth.]

"Sir John Heydon and the Lady Cary had good wits, and lov'd to be breaking of staves one upon another. Sir John comes in one day very brisk, in a pair of printed velvet breeches (which was then the fashion), but some way defective, so as she had a flurt at them presently. 'Hold you contented, good madam,' says he; 'for if it were not for printing and painting, your face and my breech would soon be out of fashion.'"

"The Lady Cary us'd to tell Sir John Heydon (for their two wits were ever clashing) that, when he was poor, and never a penny in his purse, he was as good company as any was in England, but that if he was but forty-shilling strong, there was no dealing with him on any terms."

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This class of repartee belongs to the same school and period as that attributed to the sprightly and superbly incorrigible Beatrice, with the notable difference, that in the latter case we enjoy the advantage of the superior taste and delicacy of the dramatic artist, as well as his superior wit.

The effervescent vivacity, mad merry vein of Beatrice, and her robust animal spirits, present a foil to the gentler and more softly feminine Hero. Portia in the *Merchant of Venice* is invested with something of the same exuberant, almost hysterical, gaiety and ingenuous frankness.

Hero. This name was, no doubt, a loan from Marlowe's poem, 1598, with which Shakespear shews himself acquainted in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Dogberry. See *supra*.

It is not ever easy to decide, whether the dramatist took his characters with their dialogue from living models, or whether he was partly at all events indebted to a glance at some contemporary publication, where a passage or a phrase struck his fancy. But it is quite worth while, as the author was one of the Kentish set, which is shown by me to have been more or less in touch with Shakespeariana at the time, to remind readers, that in 1583 William Lambard of Severn-oaks published a small volume, in which he describes, *inter alia*, the functions of constables, and which Shakespear turned perhaps to account in his own way. The original impersonator of Dogberry was William Kempe and Richard Cowley of Verges.

Act i., Sc. 1. *Messenger.*

The messenger here introduced must be understood from the part assigned to him to be a diplomatic personage. The laying the scene in a street is unusual, but is to be reconciled with the open-air life of Sicily.

———“*Beat.* Is it possible Disdain should die, while she hath such meet food to feed it . . . ?”

Read *to feed her*, for the text personifies the sentiment as Lady Disdain, and a few words farther on we have *her presence*.

———“*D. Pedro.* This is the sum of all : Leonato . . .”

I propose to read : “This is the sum of all. Signior Claudio and signior Benedick . . .” The pointing is inaccurate, and the name of Leonato is improperly repeated.

———*Sigh away Sundays.*

An apparent reference to the practice of Sunday weddings, which, as I mention above, the poet incongruously made applicable to all ranks of society.

Act ii., Sc. 1. “*Bened.* Ho! now you strike like the blind man—”

A direct allusion to the story in *Merry Tales and Quick Answers*. See my *Old English Jest Books*, i. 142. In the same act and scene Beatrice is made to say that it was imputed to her that she was dis-

dainful, and had her good wit out of the *Hundred Merry Tales*. The lady's obligation to the latter, of which two editions are known, but of which others probably once existed, is not immediately conspicuous, although the poet could hardly fail to be acquainted with both works at least by repute.

A copy of the *C. Merry Tales*, probably an Elizabethan impression now lost, was in the library of Captain Cox in 1575, according to Lancham, but whether one of the original impressions or a reprint we cannot tell. The author of *Pappe with an Hetchet* (1590-2), reputed to be Lyly, states in that tract that the "hundred merrie tales" was then coming out, and it was most probably the one, which fell in Shakespeare's way, but of course distinct from the Cox copy.

"*Beet*. Thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sunburnt."

Dr. Johnson proposed that we should read *wood*, for which Mr. Hunter censures him, but I do not. The antithesis intended was between a place, where the sun shone, and where it did not. In Vincent's *Discovery of Errors in Brooke's Catalogue of the Nobility*, 1622, the Address to York Herald (Brooke) has near the opening the following sentence:—"I acknowledge, he that walkes fittie yeeres in the Sunne, cannot chioose but bee Sunburnt" where the expression is evidently used to signify the acquisition of experience. The children in Norfolk used to endeavour to catch their Valentines on the proper day before sunrise, or they would be, it was said, sunburnt. In his *Paræmiologia*, 1639, Clarke has: "He hath the sun on his face"; but he, as usual, fails to explain.

Act iii., Sc. 2. This part of the story was probably drawn from Harrington's *Ariosto*, 1591, or from Beverley's separate translation of the tale of *Ariochanto and Geneva*. The incident was borrowed by the author of a later play called the *Partial Law*.

Act iii., Sc. 3. "*Dogh*. Five shillings to one on't, with any man who knows the statues—"

The two forms *statute* and *statue* appear to have been long used interchangeably. Here *statue* is misapplied as a trait of ignorance. But see *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Madden, p. 25, where the same thing is found.

—You are to bid any man stand in the prince's name.

The second of Tarlton's Court-Witty Jests shews "how Tarlton deceived the watch in Fleet Street," when they commanded him to stand.

Sc. 5. *Dogh*. . . . God's a good man.

See Hazlitt's *Proverbs*, 1907, p. 167. The sense in the interlude of *Lusty Juventus* is, that God cannot be made better, and we must take Him as He is.

Act v., Sc. 2. "*Bend*. . . . I can find out no rhyme to lady but baby

This is a skit at Peele's song in the *Arraignement of Paris*, 1584. But see also Chappell's *Popular Music*, 92, 179, 187.

Sc. 3. Heavily, heavily.

See Collier's *Bibl. Cat.*, i. 454.

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ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

Shakespeare might have derived the suggestion for this title from Heywood's *Proverbs*, or from the Posies in the Lottery of 1567. See my *Proverbs*, 1907, p. 53.

Act iv., Sc. 5. "O! I am a woodland fellow--"

Bishop Warburton took exception to this passage as being "impious trash." But that was a bishop's saying. The poet simply puts himself in the shoes, so to speak, of a rude countryman, surrounded by woods and the means of kindling fires, who deduces in his own fashion from the melodramatic picture drawn by the Church itself of the wicked passing through the broad gate leading to eternal punishment by fire a preference for the narrow one, which will suit humble folks like him better, but is not sufficiently spacious to admit pomp. The cumulative image of the wood, the fire, Hell, and the two gates, was not to be resisted, and the poet makes a point by supposing that the rich and the great would desire to enter accompanied by all their worldly belongings—a not very uncommon illusion in those days or even in these.

Act v., Sc. 3. "Lafeu. . . Good Tom Drum, lend me a handkerchief—"

The "Historie of Tom Drum" forms part of Deloney's *Gentle Craft*, 4°, 1598. He was the ancestor of Jack Drum, the hero of a play ascribed to Marston, and printed in 1601. It is to be remarked that there is a recollection of *Romeo and Juliet* in a passage, where Diana says:—

"I am, my lord, a wretched Florentine
Derived from the ancient Capulet."

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

It may be worth while to draw attention to two entries at pp. 23 and 120 of my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, where I offer remarks on a play by Dekker variously called *Barabbas* and the *Jew of Venice*, and apparently produced in 1599 for Henslowe, who paid 40s. for it.

Roberts entered the Shakespeare drama in 1598 with the alternative sub-title of the *Jew of Venice*; the *Jew* was too attractive to let drop. But he went no farther.

I suggest that, after the eventual output of Roberts's 4° of 1600, Thomas Hayes the stationer, whose daughter Roberts had married, obtained the means of revising the text from the author, and brought out his 4°, which is so much rarer, and at the time may have superseded its predecessor.

It is a characteristic point, and in sympathy with the effort to present the popular side, even in the printed book, that the running title in both quartos of 1600 is "The Comicall History of the Merchant of Venice"—a definition, which our modern notion of humour certainly fails to comprehend and hesitates to accept. The play has no more

title to be treated as a comedy than *Hamlet* or *Othello*, both of which offer incidental pleasantries. But it is repeatedly cited in early records as the *Venetian Comedy*; and it may be surmised that the term, as well as *Comical*, were equally understood both before and after Shakespear's day, and by him, in a more strictly technical sense than their modern acceptation. Of the three classes of theatrical performance outside tragedy we still recognize genteel and low comedy, and the farce pure and simple. In the *Merchant of Venice*, as originally put on the stage, there was an evident intention to attire Shylock so as to make him a butt for the gallery; yet he can hardly be said to answer, so far as his part is concerned, to low comedy or farce.

I do not agree with Mr. Fleay that the drama translated into German, and performed in or about 1611, apparently at Halle, was necessarily Shakespear's *Merchant of Venice*, although it was probably so. For Dekker's *Jew of Venice* had preceded it. The latter, however, is not known to have been printed, and the former had been in type since 1600.

It is not very surprizing that Shakespear should have acquired such an imperfect notion of Venice and its institutions, when we see and know, that in his time there was no English work, which conveyed a clear and accurate idea of either. It seems regrettable that, before he put pen to paper to write his Venetian scenes—nay, his Italian ones, too—he did not spend an hour with some friend, who was personally familiar with the country and its peculiar institutions.

It is fairly well known, that there was an anterior drama on the subject. The special ballad on the story was probably founded on the play, as usual. The story of the Bond is common to excess; one of the earliest places where it occurs is in the *Gesta Romanorum* (edit. Madden, No. 40); but see Hazlitt's *Tales and Legends*, 1892, p. 128); and much the same may be predicated of the ring in Act v. Rings have figured in romance since the production of the *Seven Wise Masters*.

Without disparaging the intellectual or human value of the present drama its localization was particularly unhappy, since almost all the allusions referring to Venice are erroneous and absurd.

Dramatis Personæ. Shylock. See what is said in my *Venetian Republic*, 1900, ii. 749, as to the mode in which the character should be attired. It seems to be quite high time that in our theatrical wardrobe we should shake ourselves loose from the ludicrous ineptitudes of the 18th and 19th centuries. Who is responsible for these barbarisms—the stage manager or the costumier? In the series of engravings by Giacomo Franco, published about the period of the play, there is a figure of the contemporary merchant, which might be serviceable to any filler of the part, except that he should have what Bacon calls "an orange-tawny bonnet."

In a tract published shortly after the play, we have an account of a Jew, who followed an army, and uttered certain prophecies, and whose name is given as *Caleb Shilocks*. Possibly the circumstance and the individual had fallen under the notice of the poet in some other and earlier way. But it is the sole trace of the name, and is a quite recent recovery.

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It is just perhaps worth incidental mention that at least from 1562 down to the poet's day the press produced a copious succession of ballads and of more elaborate and serious diatribes against usury.

Portia. This name seems to be borrowed from the lost drama by Thomas Kyd, mentioned by himself in 1594. The idea of a lady disguised in male equipments pleading in a Venetian court is chimerical—an impersonation as historically outrageous under the actual circumstances as the episodes in the *Bravo of Venice*. Such a stratagem would have been simply out of the question, where the scene is laid, although counsel not belonging to a place were sometimes engaged to conduct suits in the courts of Italy in those days. Yet, take the character as a whole, we would rather not be without her.

Where the residence of Portia is described in the edition as "on the Continent," it should rather be on the *terra firma*; but the lady probably had a villa on one of the outer islands.

Act i., Sc. 1. "Gra. There are a sort of men . . ."

The visages likened to the thick slime on the top of a stagnant pool.

Sc. 3. "Shy. Three thousand ducats—"

The poet had an imperfect conception of what this sum represented, as the Venetian ducat was $\frac{9}{5}$ of English money, so that 3000 d. would be \approx about £1400 or £9000 of our present money. In another play he makes 5000 ducats payable as ransom to a pirate! In *Twelfth Night* a character has 3000 ducats a year income. It was a figure of speech. The gold piece had no mark of value and no name; the silver one was termed *Ducatus Venetus* not *Venetorum*, as Hunter gives it. Thomas, in his *History of Italy*, first published in 1549, leads us to understand that the Venetian nobles were accustomed to husband their resources, so far as domestic expenditure went, in order to have an appreciable amount available for loans, for which they got 10, 12, and even 15 per cent. from the Government, so that the Jews were not the only offenders in this direction.

"Shy. Water-thieves and land-thieves—"

In Shakespear's London there were certain localities of notorious repute, of which one was known as the Bermudas, probably from a vague association with the region so called, in the time of Jonson, who refers to "the pirates here at hand."

See *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Madden, p. 246. Shylock, just below, adopts what is still a favourite device, in disclaiming the personal possession of so large a sum as Antonio requires—but he has a friend!

Shylock refers to the season, when Laban's and Jacob's ewes were rank, that is, in heat. The word is not explained in this sense by Nares, Halliwell, or Dyce (1875), although the last, under *fulsome* refers to it. Shylock refuses to dine with Bassanio and his friend in this scene, but afterward (Act ii., Sc. 5) sups with them in order to "feed upon the prodigal Christian." The Jew's real objection had been to partake of pork; but that in fact was a dish not usually placed on the tables of the better classes at Venice, and would assuredly not have been so in such circumstances. The prior passage reads like a compound catchpenny epigram for the meridian of the penny seats.

Sc. 9. "Even in the *force* and road of casualty."

Force should be *face*. *Road* is equivalent to *path*.

Act iii., Sc. 1. "*Shy.* Out upon her!—"

Note the fine conflict of feeling.

"Meet me at our synagogue—"

What a remorseless satire!

Act iii., Sc. 2. "*Shy.* Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions?"

The use of the word *dimensions*, which Shakespear here introduces, may be perhaps illustrated from a passage in Montaigne (*Essays*, var. ed. 1874, ii. 211), where, speaking of watchdogs' dreams, he says:—"Les chiens de garde, que nous voyons souvent gronder en songeant, & puis iapper tout a faict, & s'esveiller en sursaut, comme s'ils apperceuoient quelque estranger arriuer: cet estranger que leur ame void, c'est vn homme spirituel, & imperceptible, sans *dimension*, sans couleur, & sans estre."

Act iii., Sc. 5. "*Laun.* . . . thus, when I shun Scylla . . ."

What could Lancelot or Jessica know about the story?

Act iv., Sc. 1. *Venice. A Court of Justice.*

Historically this scene is a misconception, as the Duke or Doge at this time never presided in person over the Courts. The poet should have known, that the same was the case at home. The scene, where the Duke is made to say, "Make room," is mere grotesque caricature.

"*Shy.* If every ducat."

This is purely rhetorical.

"*Por.* Of a strange nature is the suit you follow,

Yet in such rule that the Venetian law

Cannot impugn you."

Portia would have had great difficulty in substantiating this statement.

"*Bas.* . . . But life itself, my wife, and all the world,

Are not with me esteem'd above thy life."

This is a reproduction of the classical sentiment—the friend less easily replaced than the kindred, and more to be cherished or lamented. Shakespear seems to have immediately borrowed the idea from Montaigne.

Act iv., Sc. 1. "*Port.* . . . It is enacted in the laws of Venice—"

A pure poetical invention. In the same scene Portia inquires: "Are these *balance* here to weigh the flesh?" A misreading anyhow. It should either be a *balance* or *balances*. Again, Antonio, addressing the Duke, makes a stipulation regarding the conversion of Shylock utterly out of unison with Venetian constitutional ideas and principles. Where Shylock rejects Bassanio's offer of twice the amount, the improbability, when the Court was evidently against the Jew, strikes one as grave

indeed. I may farther observe that, where Portia first allows the execution of the sentence, and stipulates only for the least possible bloodshed, and subsequently prescribes that no blood whatever may be spilled, the ostensible inconsistency aimed at prolonging the false confidence of Shylock.

Sc. 2. "Port. . . . we shall have old swearing."

Observe the peculiar sense of the word. It is still in use: but this is an early example. See my *Proverbs*, 1907, p. 344.

Act v., Sc. 1.

"Lor. There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings."

In this passage Shakespear has been thought to be under obligations to Montaigne, Book i., ch. 22; and I have in my Essay shown that the poet probably made use of the French text, and not of Florio's version. The *Merchant of Venice* existed, much as we see it, in 1598. Just at the commencement of this speech by Lorenzo, where he is made to say: "Sit, Jessica," let it be observed that the two are already seated on a bank, and that he now invites the attention of his female companion to certain of the astronomical bodies, which people usually stand to observe. I would read: "See, Jessica."

I do not know whether it will be thought ungraceful hypercriticism to speak of the dialogue between the lovers just above as rather too redolent of the inkhorn—as misappropriated learning.

Act v., Sc. 1. "Port. That light we see is burning in my hall—"

In a letter from the Venetian Ambassador in London to the Doge, April 23, 1517, he says: "Una candella facea fiamma conveniente a la candella, ma ben diffundeva el suo splendore lontano."

"Port. If you had known the virtue of the ring. . . ."

Observe the unique iteration for emphasis.

For the Rialto scene the prolegomena to Robert Tofte's translation from Nicole de Montreux of *Honour's Academy*, 1610, may be worth a glance. See my Dodsley, ix., 220. One at least of the earliest views of the famous bridge is in the well known folio collection of Franco, published about the time, when the English play appeared.

Is this not rather a melodrama than anything else? A tragical climax is in a manner threatened, but only threatened. Its citation as the *Venetian Comedy* is not altogether improper.

Perhaps it has not hitherto received sufficient attention that Shakespear associated two of his dramatic labours, this and *Othello*, with a remote Italian city and government, of which the English knowledge was at that time comparatively slender and inaccurate, since it was derived either from apocryphal publications or travellers' hearsay. Probably in the older piece by Dekker, no longer known, the Jew had the place of honour on the stage as well as in the title; but Shakespear puts the Merchant in the forefront; yet Antonio does not contribute to make the production what it is so much as Shylock and one or two other *dramatis personæ*. The main point, however, is that certain political circumstances, set forth in my *Venetian Republic*, 1900,

rendered the place and name just about the time objects of peculiar public interest, and conferred, as I say, on the Republic the unique distinction of being twice identified with this series of masterpieces. The most substantial testimony of this fact may be the appearance in 1612 of a translation by W. Shute from the French of M. de Fougassées of the *General History of the Magnificent State of Venice*, a large folio volume with a map and other illustrations, which it must have cost a considerable sum to produce; and it is not quite irrelevant to mention that it was dedicated to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

From a passage in Dr. King's *Lectures on Jonas*, preached at York, some authorities have deduced the fact, that the present play was written in 1593-4, when England was visited after the plague, which I take to have led Shakespear to quit London for the suburbs, by extraordinary weather, and an impression of 1595 has not been altogether discredited.

The German version of the interlude in the Gryphius volume, 1663, was, as usual, adapted to suit local taste. It seems strange that Shakespear should have formed so humble an opinion of the Court of Theseus as to present to it a farce suitable for a country barn; and the question arises, whether this feature, as well as the revised Induction to the *Taming of a Shrew*, were not originally prepared for some rural entertainment in Warwickshire. There is nothing in either, which Shakespear might not have written, before he left the country in 1586-7. The period of Theseus and Paris was as undetermined in the sixteenth century, as it is to-day, but these two personages are represented as having successively carried off the same woman. They may have lived centuries apart—if at all. Shakespear has breathed into the character of the Duke of Athens a vitality, of which Plutarch despaired! I do not know whether the English poet's eye ever fell on the poem by John Trussell on the subject, printed in 1595; but the name and story of Theseus had been familiarized to some extent by Underdowne's *Theseus and Ariadne*, 1566, and Turbervile's *Ovid*, 1567.

In his *James the Fourth*, 1598, but probably printed earlier, as it was licensed in 1594, Greene has introduced an interlude of *Oberon*. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, v. *King of Fairies*. Oberon is a conspicuous character in the ancient romance of *Huon of Bordeaux*. Not quite too felicitously, perhaps, Dekker, in his *Whore of Babylon*, 1607, introduces "Titania the Fairy Queene," allegorising under that name the late Queen Elizabeth. In 1608 was licensed to Thomas Pavier the *History of Titania and Theseus*, which was apparently suggested by Shakespear's play, and which is at present known only in a reprint of 1836.

In 1623 Sir Henry Herbert licensed, as by Ford and Dekker, "a new play called the Fairy Knight." I hardly know whether a 4^{to} MS. before me has anything to do with this otherwise lost piece. It is called: "The faery Knight Or Oberon the Second." In it Politico, a foolish politician, is the pretended king of Fairies, and Loswello is the fairy knight.

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The title "western flower," apostrophized in this play, is identified with Lettice, Countess of Leicester, the wife of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, mother of Queen Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Essex.

Act ii., Sc. 2. "And then the whole quire hold their hips and loffe—"

This form or pronunciation of *laugh* is required in the nursery rhyme of *Old Mother Hubbard*, where the dog is said to be laughing. *Loffe* was, no doubt, an accepted form, as Shakespear did not want it for the rhyme.

Act v., Sc. 1. *Helen's beauty*. The prose romance of Faustus, printed in German in 1587 at Berlin, had been recently (1592) published in English, and may well have attracted Shakespear's notice, as it did of other writers of the time. One of the visions of Faustus is that of Helena of Greece. *My Prose Writings*, 1906, p. 36.

"He sees more devils than vast hell can hold—" It has been thought that he had in his eye the book by Lodge, to which he evidently alludes in *Henry V.* But here he may have rather had before him the ancient popular conception of the lower regions and its ministration under Lucifer or Satan by a legion of evil spirits, whose function it was to inflict on sinners both in Purgatory and Hell the appointed torments. Elsewhere he figures Hell as empty, because "all the devils are here."

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

This drama is stated to have been produced in an unusually short time for performance before the Queen, who desired to see Falstaff in love—a sort of parallel with the *Orlando Furioso* and *Orlando Innamorato*. The date of its composition has been variously given; but as the death of Falstaff is introduced into *Henry V.* the *Merry Wives* was presumably anterior. In the text, as imperfectly printed in 1602, there is an incorrect quotation from *England's Helicon*, 1600, of a ballad-poem, first printed, I believe, in that miscellany, though written before 1593, when the author (Marlowe) died. In the accepted version it is fuller, yet still inaccurate; but the sole point is that, unless Shakespear met with the verses in MS., he appears to have borrowed the extract from the 1600 volume, with which, as I have elsewhere stated, he was not only in all probability acquainted, but to which he was a contributor. The first true text is in the folio of 1623.

Herne the Hunter is in the 4^o of 1602 called *Horne*. The so-called Herne's Oak was destroyed in 1796. But comp. *Shakespear's Library*, 1875, Part II., vol. ii., p. 188.

The reference to "Bucklersbury in simple time" prompts the suggestion that it was there that Sadler of Stratford had his druggist's emporium. From the special intimacy between the Shakespears and the Sadlers the poet must have frequently visited Sadler, who then resided so near him alike in Borough and Blackfriars days.

Dramatis Personæ—Sir Hugh Evans.

Shakespear made early acquaintance with the Welsh and their peculiarities, as there were settlers in his boyhood at Stratford, including the Ap-Roberts family, from the Principality. See my *Shakespear's Library*, part 2, ii. 108. In the Borough records, 5-6 Philip and Mary, Lewis Ap-Williams was one of the Chamberlains, and in or about 1576 Mr. Jenkins was the schoolmaster.

Act i., Sc. 3. *Bully rook*. The Editor of the *Plumpton Correspondence*, 1839, p. 168, says that in his opinion we should read *bully rag*. See my *Faiths and Folklore*, 1905, p. 506. At all events the existing form occurs four times in the plays.

Act ii., Sc. 1. *These Knights will hack*.

An inserted reference to suit the extravagance with which James I. created knights as a means of raising money. The words of the text form the title of a Jacobean ballad.

Sc. 2. "*Shal*. . . I hear the parson is no jester."

For *jester* we should read *juster* or *jouster* = fighter, Comp. Act iii., Sc. 1.

—*Mumbudget*. Comp. *Old English Jest Books*, ii. p. 222, where the passage from the play is cited by me.

Act iii., Sc. 1. Where Evans the schoolmaster quotes the verses, "To shallow rivers, to whose falls—" from *Englands Helicon*, 1600, we may safely suspect that Shakespear had the then recently published volume before him, and happened to cast his eye on the passage.

Act iii., Sc. 3. "*Mrs. Ford*. How now, my eyes muske!"

Comp. *Merie Tales of Skelton*, No. vi.

Act iv., Sc. 5. "*Simple*. I may not conceal them, sir."

"*Host*. Conceal them, or thou diest."

Simple seems to misuse the word *conceal* for *reveal*, and mine host does not correct him, unless it is a misprint.

Act v., Sc. 5. "*Fal*. Divide me like a bribe-buck."

This sentence and notion are perhaps derived from a tract by John Lary, called *Wyl Buck his Testament*, printed about 1560, for in *As You Like It*, Act ii., Sc. 1, Jaques is quoted as having said: "Poor deer, thou mak'st a testament."

The German Duke, who visited England in 1592, is said by some of the editors to have travelled under the name of the Count *Montbeliard*. But the Dukes of Wurtemberg were also by marriage Counts of *Montbeliard*, in Burgundy, a title which they retained down to the French Revolution. A portrait of the Duke, who came over here, is to be found in a 4^o volume published at Tubingen in 1604 (*Panegyrici Tres Anglo-Wurtembergici*, &c.).

The present play is said to have been presented at the Cockpit as late as November 15, 1638. A copy of the 4^o of 1619 was found many years ago at Charlecote, and is the only thing of the kind preserved there. Did the Lucy of that day buy it to see what was said about his predecessor?

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AS YOU LIKE IT.

Some remarks on the *dramatis personæ* and the obligations of Shakespear to Lodge's *Rosalind*, 1590, will be found in the text.

As You Like It seems in the poet's day to have been a proverbial phrase, and to have commended itself to him on that account. The play was separately licensed, August 4, 1600, but apparently not so published. As the lines referring to the death of Marlowe were incorrectly quoted (as from memory) in Chapin's *Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, 1598, the Shakespear drama may be taken to have been then on the stage, and to have been witnessed by the other poet.

Dramatis Personæ. *Jaques.* Milton seems to have been more or less a student of Shakespear. Had he this character in his mind's eye, when he composed his *Allegro and Penseroso*?

Act i., Sc. 1. *Orl.* "As I remember . . ."

This seems to begin abruptly, and there should be before "as I remember" a —. Before "charged" just below a word or two are apparently deficient, query, "my father." If Orlando received 1000 crowns as a legacy from his father—they must have been of gold—the amount was sufficient to render him independent of his brother, had he so chosen. But Shakespear was rather imperfectly versed in monetary values, except those current at home, as is shown in the *Merchant of Venice* and elsewhere.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "1st Lord. . . . 'Poor deer,' quoth he, 'thou mak'st a testament.'"

Comp. note on *Merry Wives of Windsor*, v., 5.

Act ii., Sc. 4. *The world's a stage.*

This idea occurred to Pythagoras and to Palladas the grammarian, of whom the latter lived eleven centuries before Shakespear. He says:—

"This life a theatre we well may call,
Where every actor must perform with art:
Or laugh it through, and make a farce of all,
Or learn to bear with grace his tragic part."

And so from the Anthology of Stobæus, a book on the shelves of Jonson at least, Shakespear might have learned that the *Agæ of Man* was as old as Plato.

In *Damon and Pithias*, written about 1586, the comparison of Pythagoras is cited in these terms:—

"Pythagoras said, that this world was like a stage,
Whereon many play their parts."

And in his *Essays* Montaigne introduces the same sentiment from Petronius Arbiter: *Mundus universus exercet histrionem.* We thus gain a consensus of opinion and sympathy on the similitude of a transitory existence to an actor crossing the boards from the pens of

philosophical writers living so many ages apart. So early did the figure strike a thinker as appropriate and picturesque, and so hard it has proved to add to it any new force. I meet with a parallel sentence: *Mundus scena, vita transitus: venisti, vidisti, abiisti*. It is the identical conceit. But our poet, perhaps feeling that the thing was *decies repetita*, improved on the old saw by making it a peg whereon to hang the *Seven Ages of Man*.

The same train of thought is observable in the song in *Twelfth Night*: "When that I was and a tiny little boy," and there and in the schoolboy with his satchel Shakespear may have recalled his own daily boyish trudge between his home and his lessons.

Act ii., Sc. 5. *Under the greenwood tree.*

In the *Proverbs of Hendyng* (*Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, i. p. 113) we meet with a curious prototype of this sentiment: "Under booke shal men wedder abide." Comp. my *Proverbs*, 3rd edit., p. 509, where I give a modernised rendering:—

"Under the greenwood tree,
Hard weather endured must be,
Quoth Hendyng."

Act ii., Sc. 6. *Jaques*. "Good morrow, fool," quoth I; "No, sir, quoth he, 'call me not fool, till Heaven hath sent me fortune.'"

See my *English Proverbs*, 1907, p. 156, and Montaigne, *Essays*, 1902, iv., p. 48. Jaques alludes to the common adage: "Fools have fortune."

Act ii., Sc. 7. *Jaq.* And then he drew a dial from his poke."

This allusion is merely quoted for the sake of mentioning that, at a period long after that of the poet, the usage of carrying sun-dials as time-keepers prevailed in the Midlands and North. A ring dial of the seventeenth century, which had belonged to a ploughman employed on Worksope Manor, was lately advertised as having been obtained from his descendant. He bore it, not in his pocket, like the fool in the play, but on his breast—perhaps he had no pocket.

Act ii., Sc. 7. In the passage, where Jaques says, "A fool! A fool!" and afterward, as a sort of aside ("a miserable world"), Hunter would substitute *ort* for *world*, and points out that *ort* recurs in *Troilus and Cressida* in the sense of *fragments*. I do not agree with the change, but think that a mark of admiration is wanted after *world*. The word *ort* is not properly explained; it is = Dutch *cort*, the quarter of a duit, a mere fraction.

Act iii., Sc. 1. *Duke Fred.* . . . But were I not the better part made mercy."

This sentence is rather elliptical. The sense is, "But were not the better part of me made of mercy" or merciful. Comp. *Henry VI.*, Part II., Act i., Sc. 3: "*Duch.* Though in this place most master wear no breeches"—i.e. she, who is most master, wears no breeches.

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Act iii., Sc. 2.

"Orl. . . . O Rosalind, these trees shall be my books,
And in their barks my thoughts I'll character—"

This minor incident is directly borrowed from the novel; and the author of *Wily Beguiled*, 1606, again, has adopted it from one or the other—more probably from Shakespear, whom he seems to have studied. But the notion is at least as old as Aristophanes, who ridicules the practice in his *Acharnians*. It is one still in full vogue.

Act iii., Sc. 3. These are allusions to the *Gargantua* of Rabelais and to Ovid's *Epistolæ ex Ponto*, which must have been derived from the French or from oral communication, unless a version of Rabelais registered in 1592 and again in 1594 was published, and has perished.

Act iii., Sc. 3. "*Touchstone*. Good even, good master What ye call it—"

Compare Hazlitt's *Proverbs*, 1907, p. 520. The colloquialism is more common than it used to be. *Vide supra*.

Act iii., Sc. 5. *Chapman and As You Like It*.

The Rev. Richard Hooper, in his edition of Chapman, expresses the opinion, that that writer may have seen Marlowe's translation of *Musgus* in MS., as it was licensed in 1593, and in fact, from what we now have some means of knowing or at least conjecturing, he may have had under his eyes the MS. itself. But, as he merely cites the lines quoted by Shakespear in the play, I think that there is no doubt, whence he derived his acquaintance with the matter. The citation may serve to establish the performance of the drama in or before 1598.

HAMLET.

The marriage of James VI. of Scotland in 1590 to a Danish princess seems to have drawn the two countries together, and to have had the effect of introducing on the English stage dramatic productions illustrative of Danish history—Shakespear's play inclusive. In 1603 a small volume of *Prophecies*, by Merlin and others, purported to include, besides England, Scotland, and part of France, *Denmark*, doubtless in compliment to the queen, and as late as 1622 Davies of Hereford penned his *Bien Venu* "to our dear brethren the Danes."

The prototype of all the Hamlet narratives seems to have been Saxo Grammaticus, who through the *Hystorie of Hamblet* (if there was an impression antecedent to that of 1608) may have very well become known to Shakespear. Saxo Grammaticus tells the story very differently from the English dramatist; but there are episodes in his version, in common with those derived from it in Italian, French, and English, which Shakespear utilized in his eclectic and assimilating fashion.

The earliest play on this subject was apparently in existence in 1588, and is doubtless distinct from one licensed for performance by the Lord Admiral's and Lord Chamberlain's men at the Newington theatre, June 9, 1594. Now, a difficulty arises, if it be one, that on July 7, 1602, Henslowe paid Henry Chettle, in earnest of "Danish

Tragedy," 20s., that is, of a new production so entitled, for such a sum would not have been advanced on account for mere alterations; and it is wholly uncertain, whether the work was completed, or, if so, is extant. But it seems singular that three dramatic efforts; the First sketch of *Hamlet*, 1588, by Kyd in Mr. Fleay's view, the printed copy, 1603, and this play by Chettle, should be concurrently, as it were, before the public, where the subject was not one of striking popularity, since the Danish marriage of James VI. of Scotland was barely sufficient to awaken so lively an interest in so remote a region. Of course, the *Danish Tragedy* by Chettle might have been wholly unconnected with the *Hamlet* in any form. But comp. *Troilus and Cressida*, *suprd.* The *Hamlet* quoted by Lodge in his *Wit's Miserie*, 1596, was doubtless the one shown at the Newington playhouse.

In the list of early English plays in Germany given by Kohn and Fleay occur: "King of Denmark and King of Sweden," a tragi-comedy, identified by Fleay with *Sir Olymon* and *Sir Clanvdes*, and, according to him, by R. Wilson. This is merely mentioned to shew the interest in Danish topics or plots.

In a collection of proverbs by John Clarke (*Paræmiologia*, 1639), there is the saying:

*A stonc hamlet with
four leggs.*

There is no such passage in the Shakespear play; and it may be a sentence supposed to be characteristic of the Danish prince. I give the name exactly as it presents itself in the original. Is there a possibility that the saying is a salvage from the older drama, or one of them, which reached the proverb-gatherer by hearsay? The introduction of the *snage* into plays was, equally with the ballad, an ante-Shakespearian device, and constituted part of the scheme in the elder playwrights of popularizing their performances, and catching the popular taste. If this apparent fragment of dialogue really belongs to the ante-Shakespear drama, it, with the passage in Lodge's *Wit's Miserie*, 1596, where the writer refers to the Ghost, who cried so miserably at the theatre, "Hamlet, revenge," and a similar one in *Westward Ho*, 1607, constitute all that survives of the text, and the two bits do not inspire us with a very lofty notion of the merit of the rest, of which Kohn has printed a modernized German version. But it is so far curious, that the 1588 or even 1594 play should have been so long remembered, as neither was printed.

It is difficult to decide, in the presence of the rival *Hamlets*, to which the series of allusions collected by Halliwell-Phillipps (*Outlines*, 6th ed., ii. 513) belong. A strange piece of neutral criticism seems to be that, which Gabriel Harvey is said to have inserted in his copy of Speght's Chaucer, 1598, where he brackets *Lucrece* and *Hamlet* as having in them wherewith "to please the wiser sort."

As the play opens with a view in front of the Castle of Elsinore, it becomes of a certain interest to cite the Dutch *Wagenaer* of 1600, where an engraving of this building occurs. Whether the poet saw it, is problematical; but an account may, as in so many other cases, have indirectly reached him.

I conclude that for theatrical accuracy the Dane ought to be represented with flaxen hair; but we have Hamlets of all complexions as well as statures. The real one is said to grow *purnier*, as the dramatist may have done in middle life. It is a play for the closet. The imagination can paint best the stage effects and accessories.

What may be perhaps termed the unofficial side of the principal character betrays itself at every turn. No prince, in other words, was ever so wise as Shakespear, and the philosophy of Jaques is apt to strike us as more germane.

The misanthropic vein, so conspicuous in this play, in *Timon*, and to a certain extent in *Lear*, betrays itself in the celebrated song in *As You Like It*, commencing, "Under the Greenwood Tree," and in the character of Jaques. But the misanthropy of the banished Amiens is perfectly unlike that of Hamlet or Jaques, as all fail to resemble the misanthropy of Timon or of Lear, where the operating agency is ingratitude, yet, again, ingratitude of a totally different nature and origin. The caustic humour of the Prince of Denmark is a product of intellectual insight, that of Jaques of physical temperament, carried almost to affectation or whimsicality. We seem to recognize the personal idiosyncrasies of Shakespear himself behind Hamlet in a far greater and truer measure than in the other cases. This would be a piece of autobiography which I should be most unwilling to discredit and surrender.

The drama continued to be reprinted down to 1637, on the title-page of which issue we encounter the strange statement, that the text has been enlarged, "according to the true and perfect copy last printed."

A post-Restoration edition of *Hamlet*, 1676, is well-known, but at the end of a play by R. Rhodes, *Flora's Vagaries*, 1670, the tragedy is advertised as on sale. There had been apparently no separate impressions since 1637.

Act i., Sc. 1. "It faded on the crowing of the cock."

Comp. *History of Tom Thumbs*, 1630 (Hazlitt's *Popular Poetry*, ii., 191):—

"And so with peace and quietnesse
he left this earth below;
And vp into the Fayry Land
his ghost did fading goe."

Act i., Sc. 2. "O that this too too solid flesh would melt!"

Comp. Dekker where he speaks of Christ as

"The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him."

The duplicated form *too too* is not uncommon.

—"In my mind's eye, Horatio."

Shakespear probably knew that the human eye was a mere mechanical medium, through which we distinguish objects, and that the real visual faculty resided in the mind or rather in the blood.

The treatment of the *Ghost* in this play is a piece of dramatic licence, when it becomes visible to others besides Hamlet, and much more, when it is made to speak in a passage, where it and the Prince are left alone. Shakespear could not, consistently with theatrical exigencies, keep within due bounds, limit the experience to a piece of mental refraction—"to the mind's eye." Nevertheless the *Ghost* is little more than a time-bound vision and a dumbshow, and does not really contradict the sentiment of the "undiscovered country" and "irrepassable bourn." If, as is generally thought, the poet filled the part, he had not much to get by heart, and even that offered a certain impropriety.

Act i., Sc. 5. "Pol. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks."

An expression borrowed by Henry Parrot for his volume of *Epigrams*, 1813. He adopted another title from this play, the *Mouse Trap*. The latter is cited by Sharpsham in his *Fleur*, 1607, at least in the edition of 1810 before me—in the address to the Reader-Hearer, where he says that his play has not come like a Mouse-trap to inveigle your good opinions. Evelyn saw it performed, Nov. 28, 1661.

—"O my prophetic soul! mine uncle."

Comp. Sonnet 107 for this identical expression. Such parallels make something for the mutual authentication and ownership of Plays and Poems.

Act ii., Sc. 2. "Ham. . . . for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."

Comp. Montaigne, I., 19, "*Que le goust des biens et des maux, &c.*"

"—were it not that I have had dreams."

Comp. Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* :—

"For sure they saw't, for Æthiops never dream."

Coleridge once said to my grandfather Hazlitt, when the latter told him that he did not dream, "Then you have no imagination."

"Ham. Ay, sir, to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand."

This, strangely enough, appears to be an exact inversion of the author's sense. Should we not read: "Ay, sir, as this world goes, to be honest, &c."

"Ros. . . . we coted them on the way."

Coted = accosted. We keep the old French form *accoster*.

"Ham. Look, where my abridgments come"—i.e., the actors.

Act iii., Sc. 1. "Ham. To be, or not to be, that is the question."

This passage, and one in *Measure for Measure*, are compared *supra* with one in Montaigne.

"—the undiscover'd country, from whose bourn—" It has been inconsiderately objected to this passage, that in the same drama the author makes Hamlet's father revisit the world. But in the present

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case there is the high philosophical sentiment, in the Ghost scene the politic homage to popular belief.

'Get thee to a nunnery: Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?'

Read: "Why, wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners!"

Sc. 2.—"Ham. . . . A very very *Patocke*."

Some explain this to be a *batocco*, a Roman copper coin; but I fear that there were no *batocchi* contemporary with Shakespear. I suggest *pie-O*, the *O* being a pleonasm. In the same scene the allusion to the oblivion, into which the hobby-horse had fallen, seems suggestive of a glance by the writer at his friend Kemp's *Nine days Wonder*, 1600.

Act iv., Sc. 2.—Where the Prince of Denmark speaks of a player wearing two Provençal roses in his slashed shoes, it is more or less material here to mention that for *Provence* we ought to read *Provins*. But Sir Hugh Plat (*Flora's Paradise*, 1608, p. 77) has *Province roses*, apparently under the same erroneous impression.

"Pol. Do you know me, my lord?"

Ham. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

Pol. Not I, my lord.

Ham. Then I would you were so honest a man."

This reference of Hamlet seems to be ironical. Fishmongers, even in the time of Elizabeth, enjoyed a bad name as regraters and extortioners; and the unreasonably high price of fish is a matter of particular remark in the Fishmongers' pageant of 1590, recovered a few years since by me.

It was the same at Rome and Athens. See St. John's *Manners and Customs of Ancient Greece*, 1842, iii. 99.

Act iv., Sc. 5. "Oph. You must sing down a down, an' you call him a down a. O, how the wheel becomes it!"

The speaker appears to refer to a tune, which could be sung, while the spinning-wheel was in motion. But a song of the Spinning Wheel is notified by Chappell, p. 622, as by T. Durlsey, or at any rate as edited by him; there was such a tune in the time of James I. A ballad of the *Seaman's Victory* of the time of Charles II. is directed to be sung to it. *Early Naval Ballads*, 1841, p. 47.

Act iv., Sc. 5. *They say the owl was a baker's daughter.*

See Halliwell's *Popular Rhymes*, 1849, p. 167, where this is described, on the authority of a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, as a Herefordshire fairy tale. But it also belongs to Gloucestershire, where Jesus is substituted for the fairy. The fable may have been more or less widely diffused—at all events over that part of England.

Ophelia's mental derangement is made to run into channels, which certainly do not impress one as germane to the character, her rank, age, and sex considered.

Act v., Sc. 1. "The age is grown so picked."

Picked appears to be a term borrowed from the peaked or piked shoes formerly in use, and the sentence immediately succeeding may be thought to corroborate such an etymology. But the definition of *nice* or *spruce* is also admissible as a secondary meaning or acceptation. Shakespear through Hamlet points to the appreciable development of democratic feeling, of which his sovereign and he lived only to see the rise.

Act v., Sc. 1. "Ham. Let me see. Alas! Poor Yorick!"

See a curious copy of verses founded on this passage in my *Inedited Poetical Miscellanies*, 1870, called "A Conference with a Dead Man's Head." Comp. *supra* for farther remarks on this scene.

In digging a new grave in old ground, where successive interments have taken place, it is not unusual to encounter remains, skulls of course included. A skull was picked up on Barnes Common, near the cemetery, not long since (1907) by one of the keepers. But there is a measure of unfitness in apostrophizing such a thing, where it referred to a person buried within a brief period, as the same plot of earth would not have been probably broken at so short an interval for another body.

"1 Clown. It must be so offendendo . . ."

The phonetic learning of the speaker of course arises from him having misheard the real phrase, *felo de se*. It is open to doubt, whether the fellow had ever heard the latter, and the use of the expression is not an unfelicitous piece of humour.

"1 Priest. Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd as we have warrantise . . ."

Warrantise, not *warranties*, as in some of the old editions. Prior (*Ancient Danish Ballads*, 1860, i., xli.) pointed out that the "virgin crants" and "maiden strewnments" have their counterparts and analogues in the early Danish pre-nuptial usages.

In the same act and scene we get the phrase, which is put into the mouth of the clown, "crouner's quest law," and it is explained by the authorities as a vulgarism for *coroner's*; but in a tract printed in the reign of Henry VIII.—"The enquire and verditte of the quest pannell of the death of Richard Hune," Thomas Barnwell is described at the end as "Crouner of the Citie of London." It was a familiar form of the word.

—"even Christian."

A very early use of *even* for *equal* or *fellow* occurs in a broadside from the press of Caxton (about 1484), containing Prayers to be said at deathbeds. See Blades, ed. 1877, p. 283.

—"Laer. To o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head of blue Olympus."

A little below the poet makes Hamlet refer to Ossa, in both cases with equal improbability; but we see that he had been studying Ovid's *Fasts*, and hastened to utilize the information.

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"*Ham.* Would drink up Esil? eat a crocodile?"

Esil is, I think, simply vinegar. The Prince is distracted, and there is the whimsical collocation of a crocodile. A little before, where the queen says: "What *thence*?" unless we are to understand, "What's the matter?" I should be disposed to read: "What *then*?" If *then* were in the MS. copy written *thence*, it might be easily misread.

Act v., Sc. 2. "*Ham.* The potent poison quite o'ercrowns my spirit—"

Should it not be *o'ergrows*?

TWELFTH NIGHT.

This drama, performed at Candlemas at the Middle Temple, in February 1601-2, was first printed in the folio of 1623, and in the contemporary Manningham Diary under 1601-2 is explicitly registered under its double title (suggestive of an option), so that Marston in 1607 must have adopted the latter portion, as he could scarcely have been unaware of the Shakespear piece—at all events by report.

Marston survived till 1634; but he relinquished literary pursuits at an early date, and went into the church—a parallel case to some extent with Gosson and Lodge, and the converse of Greene.

There appears to be no means of ascertaining from the Middle Temple records, what the circumstances were in connection with the production of the play, the character of the dresses and appointments, and the performers of the parts. Old *Twelfth Night* fell on January 12, 1601-2, nor is there any ground for supposing that the play had been already presented elsewhere. An official of the Inn suggests, that the *Reader* for the time being (a function discharged in Shakespear's day by some eminent lawyer) may, with a committee of Benchers or members, have superintended the business. In the printed Records there are brief references to festivities intended at Christmas, 1599-1601, but not to this event, which conferred on the Inn such an unique distinction—one, of which it still remains serenely unconscious. Halliwell-Phillips seems to have thought that the play was produced on *Twelfth Night* itself; but I deem it likelier that the title occurred or was proposed to the poet, while he was engaged in the work. It is somewhat difficult to decide, whether the sort of droll or *Lusituncula* performed at St. John's College, Oxford, by youths of the parish, at *Twelfth Night*, 1602, and founded on Ovid's story of Narcissus, was prompted by the Shakespear piece, or was an accidental coincidence. It seems to be little more than a transfer from the Latin, and is poor stuff.

The play concludes with the Clown's song, "When that I was and a little tiny boy;" and the refrain, "With hev, ho, the wind and the rain," is strictly in unison with the structure of several Elizabethan madrigals. But, moreover, the composition seems to have given rise to a popular ballad; for in a volume by C. T., doubtless Cyril Tourneur

printed in 1605, under the title of *Laugh and Lie Downe, or the worldes Folly*, we meet with a list of such pieces then professedly current, and among them, "O, the winde and the weather and the raine." I scarcely know whether the season at which *Twelfth Night* was performed at the Temple had anything to do with the tenor of the ditty put into the mouth of the clown. Shakespear himself, judging from numerous allusions in the plays, was not indifferent to the weather, and went so far at last as to base one of his finest productions on it, namely, the *Tempest*. But we do not appear to know whether the refrain in *Twelfth Night* and the ballad of 1605 were from a common source, or whether Shakespear originated it, so much of this species of literature has perished. It may be assuredly said that there is, in the presence of certain lyrical productions, almost certainly from his pen, no ground for questioning his authorship of others—of some of those interspersed in the plays, a few of which are eminently beautiful, while others are neither better nor worse than his acknowledged non-dramatic writings.

In the song above mentioned, where the clown doubtless accompanied the words with characteristic and significant gesture, I should be inclined to read: "When that I was, *ah!* a tiny little boy." For the word *and* scarcely bears any sense in either of its acceptations; and comp. the song in *Hamlet*: "To contract, O, the time, for, *ah!* my belove." If this suggestion be correct or sound, the snatch by the Fool in *Lear* may be susceptible of a similar emendation.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*Seb.* . . . He left behind him myself and a sister, both born in an hour."

On February 2, 1584-5, were born to Shakespear twin children, Hamnet (or Hamlet) and Judith. I do not know, whether it is an extravagant hypothesis, that the poet, when he was writing this play, had in his mind this trivial domestic detail. It was almost precisely the same time of the year. But not more than four years had elapsed since the impressive death of Hamnet in 1596.

Act ii., Sc. 3. *O, the twelfth day of December.*

This song seems to be lost. See Ritson's *Ancient Songs*, ed. 1877, lxxx. But the one partly given in the same scene, "Farewell, dear heart, since I must needs be gone," seems to have been derived from Robert Jones's *First Book of Aires*, 1600, which, when the play was in course of composition was a novelty in the musical and literary world, and fell well in with Sir Toby's favourite diversion. Shakespear evidently preferred for quotation or use the more recent popular productions to such as might have faded out of the general recollection of playgoers. Comp. my note *infra* on Sonnet 29.

Act ii., Sc. 5. "*Mal.* M. O. A. I. . . ."

Shakespear here, and in the letter which follows, seems to satirize the mysterious and euphuistic style, which had been in vogue before his time, and which continued to form a feature in literary fiction

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both in England and abroad. It belongs to the same family as the cypher and cryptogram.

———"Mal. . . . It is, in contempt of question, her hand."

i.e. beyond or outside doubt.

———"Maria. . . . here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling."

The poet recollected the sport itself on his own Avon in early days. He uses the expression metaphorically here and elsewhere—in the passage speaking of "groping for trout in a peculiar river."

Act iii., Sc. 1. "Cla. Now Jove, in his next commodity of hair, send thee a beard."

"Viola. By my troth, I'll tell thee I am almost sick for one; though I would not have it grow on my chin . . ."

Shakespeare had in his recollection, or under his eye, the story in *A G. Mery Tatys*, 1526, folio x. The dramatist surely overlooked the fact that Viola personated a man, and in any case the sentiment would not have been of the delicatest.

Act iii., Sc. 4. *Illyria*. The savage state of this province was a tradition. See *Four Years (1515-19) at the Court of Henry VIII.*, by Rawdon Brown, 1854, i. 24.

There is slight risk in assuming that the author superintended the details of the presentation.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Act ii., Sc. 4. "As I subscribe not these nor any other,
But in the loss of question."

Loss of question = *casus questionis*, which signifies the failure of an argument in logic.

Act iii., Sc. 1. "Claud. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where."

This passage, and the one in *Hamlet*, may be compared with Montaigne, i. 19; but more is said on the subject *supra*. The remark of Claudio, just below: "I am so out of love with life," seems forced and abrupt. In the same scene (see p. 122 *supra*) the sentence, "What should such fellows as I—" impresses us as more pertinent to the writer than to the prince.

———"Claud. . . . the pendent world."

This expression appears to me to denote the poet's sense of the suspension of our globe in space and maintenance in its place by the force of attraction. See my *Man Considered in Relation to God and a Church*, 1908, p. 376.

Act iv., Sc. 1. "Take, O take those lips away—"

Rimbault (*Musical Illustrations of Percy's Reliques*, 1850, p. 12) properly points out that, with the exception of the first stanza here given, the earliest authority for the ascription of this song to Shakespear is the posthumous edition of the Poems, 1640. But comp. Bell's *Songs from the Dramatists*, 1864, pp. 95-6, where it is shown that the verses are more fully given, yet as part of the text, that is to say, not as by Shakespear, in the *Bloody Brother*, 1639 (acted two years before). I would say that I know no author capable of having composed such a masterpiece except the writer of the earlier drama; but it seems curious that, if he had the entire composition by him, he did not insert it either here or in some miscellany of the time. The play, however, was not presented till 1604. Of the length of time, during which the lyrical poems, belonging to plays, were apt to be held over, the suppression of the songs in Lyly's dramatic works till their appearance in a collective form in 1632 is a singular illustration.

Act v. "—faults so countenanc'd, that the strong statutes
Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
As much in mock as mark."

The commentators have sufficiently dwelled perhaps on this passage. I would merely add, that the premises of the Shakespearean barber contained a more multifarious and complex assortment of stock than those of his modern namesake, when the Barbers and Surgeons became independent Gilds. See my *Livery Companies of London*, 1892, p. 365.

OTHELLO.

This play, of which the first complete text is in the folio of 1623, is not true to history. No Moor was ever employed by Venice, and the facts of the campaign in Cyprus are altogether different, although they still shew Desdemona's Tower at Famagusta. In 1604, when *Othello* is said to have been composed, the Cypriot episode was well within memory; the Battle of Lepanto, which followed it, occurred in the autumn of 1571. The Venetian house of Moro, which gave a Doge to the Republic and a second distinguished personage in the shape of a great soldier in the preceding century, may have occasioned the mistake. Some farther remarks on this subject will be found in the text.

Note here the contrast between Black and White, the sexual sympathy of opposite colours, carried on from the Sonnets, as well as the recollection of the early lyrics. Compare, for the foundation story, my *Shakespear's Library*, 1875, Part I., vol. ii. p. 282; but the writer appears to have been some one at a distance from Venice, and, like Shakespear, imperfectly conversant with the costume of the Republic.

Altogether the view taken by editors of the play and its sources seems to me to be open to doubt and deserving of farther and more careful investigation, except that it has to be said that in the treatment of real or supposed originals the poet has generally permitted himself a free hand. But there is little doubt, that the true station of Desdemona, as well as that of Othello himself, has been misunderstood by

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those unacquainted with local conditions. As regards the so-called Moor, it should be recollected that the Venetians themselves in their prevailing complexions were sufficiently swarthy to appear dark to a Western European.

This and *Troilus and Cressida* are the two dramas exceptionally accompanied by prefatory matter. The introduction in this case purports to be written by the stationer; but it has a rather Thorpian flavour, and he was still in considerable evidence.

Othello had been entered to Lawrence Hayes in 1619; he was the son of Thomas Hayes, who had printed one or two of Shakespear's dramas. But when Thomas Walkley re-entered the play in 1621, instead of naming it, as Hayes had done, the *Ethiopian History*, he registered it under the name now familiar, lest it might be confounded with a new edition of Heliodorus then in the press. The *Merchant of Venice* had been published by the elder Hayes in 1600, and the scene of *Othello* was partly laid in the same locality.

The original designation is interesting, because it shows the conception of what the hero should appear. In a Collection of Treatises on Tobacco, 1682, there is a reference to the death of Desdemona in illustration of the fatal charms of the weed: "And loves, and kill, like the Venetian Moor." The smothering episode was one especially apt to dwell in the minds of audiences, and to be carried out in full form. It was at once conventional and melodramatic.

Act i., Sc. 1. It may be dramatically immaterial what official machinery Iago is made to quote in respect to his promotion or otherwise; but he could scarcely have been at Rhodes in 1522 and at Cyprus in 1571.

Act ii., Sc. 1. "*Iago*. Come on, come on; you are pictures out of doors."

The form *Iago* is really the early English way of spelling the Spanish *Jago* = *James*. *Jago* is a well-known West-country family name. But Shakespear may have met with the precise form in Richard Harvey's *Philadelphus*, 1593.

Compare a passage in Middleton's *Blurt, Master Constable*, 1602 (works ed. Dyce, i., 280), which reads like the prototype of the one in Shakespear, and my *Proverbs*, 1907, p. 549. A writer in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1907 speaks of women with the faces of angels and the souls of courtezans.

Act iv., Sc. 3. *All the green willow.*

Such a ballad, possibly the same, is cited in *Laugh and Lie Down, or the World's Folly*, 1605, by C. T., as sung to the famous tune of Dindong. This is so far important, that it was almost concurrent with the first presentation of *Othello*.

LEAR.

See Madden's *Gesta Romanorum*, p. 450. And also Stories 15 and 33. There seems to be almost too early a transition to mental

derangement here, as there is in *Macbeth* to callous criminality. But Lear was an older man. His phrenzy of indignation resolves itself into *amentia*, mere senile dotage. There may be said to be a surfeit of insanity in the play, with Edgar's pretended madness. The strength of the poet lay in sentiment and passion rather than in plot.

The drama, which suggested to Shakespear his own vastly superior one, was acted in 1593 by the Queen's and Lord Sussex's men, and licensed for the press the same year, although no earlier or other edition than that of 1606 is at present known. Shakespear's *Lear* followed much more closely than the printed copy suggests the foundation-play, and the poet must have set about the work very shortly after the re-appearance of the Old Chronicle-history in 1605. The new composition was performed before James I. on December 26, 1606, by the Globe Company, and Halliwell-Phillipps considers, I think wrongly, that it had been exhibited at that house in the summer of the year.

At least a twelvemonth elapsed between the presentation before the Court and the issue in a printed shape, and there was an intermediate negotiation on the part of the publisher with the licensing authorities. Even when the copy was sent to press, it seems to have been found to exhibit certain misreadings, which were rectified in some copies of the first issue of 1608. The conspicuous station of the name of Shakespear on the title-page of 1608 is due, no doubt, to a solicitude on the part of the publisher not to have it confounded with the parent piece so recently printed or reprinted.

Act. i., Sc. 4.

"Fool. . . . That such a king should play bopeep,
And go the *fool* among."

Perhaps there was the intention to play on the similarity between *fool* and *foule*, Fr. for crowd or throng.

Act iii., Sc. 2. (Song): "He that has *and* a little tiny wit."

Comp. the song at end of *Twelfth Night*: "When that I was and a little tiny boy—" and see my note.

Act iii., Sc. 4. "*Pillicock sat on Pillicock hill.*"

The obscene significance of this line was sufficiently manifest to an average contemporary audience, and it is one of those passages, which might have been advantageously absent, as the sentiment is not even proper to the character. It is pure bawdry—only too virile, as the modern phrase is. The drama was originally presented at Whitehall before James I. Singularly enough, in common with *Hot Cocks*, the phrase seems to have undergone a metamorphosis into a nursery rhyme in a varied form, and the original sense was forgotten. See Halliwell's *Archaic Dictionary* in v.

Sc. 4. "*Edgar. . . . Whom the foul fiend . . .*" Comp. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. 1.

. . . "through fire and through flame. . . ."

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This is a recollection of the song in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. 1, or could the writer have had a copy of the earlier play at his elbow? We ought to read: "thorough fire and thorough flame."

—"But mice and rats. . . ."

Shakespear copied this almost literally from the romance of *Sir Bevis of Hampton*. See my *Warton*, 1871, iii. 198.

TAMING OF A SHREW.

The anonymous writer of the foundation-play, 1594, was indebted to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*. The plot, a familiar one, is found in *El Conde Lucanor*, by Juan Manuel, 1575, ch. 45; but the notion is Oriental; we get it in Haroon-el-Reschid and the Caliph of a Day; and the story has been related of Philip le Bon, Duke of Burgundy.

A ballad called the *Coolinge of Curst Kate* was licensed in 1594, and was doubtless suggested by the play. In the *Tempest* the name Kate is used for a termagant.

The word-combat between Katherine and Petruchio in Act ii., sc. 1, of the Shakespear production reminds us of Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing* with a signal difference, and indeed the wit and learning of the lady are even more improbable. But both passages strongly contrast with the very coarse and vulgar dialogue in the 4^o of 1594.

Induction.—The tradition that the comic or farcical effects, here worked out in a more artistic and refined manner than in the parent-play, recall an actual adventure of the poet, is inadmissible. We are not acquainted with the name of the dramatist, to whom we owe the older piece; but two rather curious points may be noticed: the common presence of the name of Sly the tinker, a Stratford one, in both plays, and the common employment of the term "ten commandments" for the ten finger-nails (*Henry VI.*, Part I.). There is no textual trace of Shakespear in the 4^o of 1594. In his own work there is an unusual extent in the proem of local costume and colouring.

In the first scene of the Induction note the abrupt and forced conceit where the sleeping man is supposed to be discovered—"Lord. What's here?"

Act i., Sc. 1 [of Induction]. *Before an Alehouse on a Heath.*

Barton-on-the-Heath, where Shakespear's relatives the Lamberts resided. The heath was subsequently enclosed.

Sc. 2. *Marian Hacket.*

The Hackets were living at Quinton, near Wilmecote, in 1591.

Enter Players.

This seems to be the prototype of the far finer and more thoughtful passage in *Hamlet*.

Act i., Sc. 1 [of Play]. "*Luc.* . . . I am arrived for fruitful Lombardy."

Surely *for* should be *from*, and Shakespear may have written *fro*. The speaker has left the fruitful region behind him, and has come to profit by the course of learning pursuable at the *Studio* or University of Padua.

"*Luc.* Basta."

This word should be printed in Italics.

Act v., Sc. 2.

Read: "Here is a wonder, if you talk of wonder"; the article before the last word being surplusage, and destroying the metre.

Act v., Sc. 2. *Re-enter Katharina.*

Blades (*William Caxton*, 1877, pp. 273-5) quotes from the Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry, 1484, the story in the 18th chapter: "How a woman sprange vpon the table," as an illustration of this closing scene.

Act v., Sc. 2. "*Kath.* Fie, fie!—"

The whole of this speech down to the line "I am asham'd—" seems to belong to Petruchio, and Katherine follows naturally with an apology for her former frowardness.

So feebly and lamely does the play end, that one suspects that it was left incomplete or part of the MS. lost. The plot is the exact reverse of the *Griselda* type of story. In that the meek heroine overcame by her submission the harder nature of the man; in this the man subdues the skittish or vixenish woman by a specious exhibition of domineering temper.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

The piece on this subject cited by Anthony Wood was almost certainly in Latin. See my *Manual of Old Plays*, 1892, p. 238.

It is very remarkable that on February 7, 1602-3, a play was registered as "*The Booke of Troilus and Cressida*, as it is acted by my Lo. Chamberlains men," and as the work of Chettle and Dekker. It is almost undoubtedly the same production as that mentioned by Henslowe in 1599; but it is no longer known, so that there is no means of collation with Shakespear's drama. But the poet apparently had the subject and even the actual drama before him, when he composed the passage in *Twelfth Night*, iii. 1.

The Shakespear piece was licensed January 28, 1608-9, and published, 4°, 1609; and a circumstance is associated with the first printed copy, which may, in the presence of the testimony to an anterior work, favour the theory, that the drama, as we possess it, was not originally, and is not wholly, from the pen of Shakespear; for when the printing had been completed, a cancel title was given, in which it was disclosed, that the piece had been performed at the Globe by the king's

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servants, whereas on the original forefront there had been no hint of it having been placed on the stage.

Although this drama did not appear in type till 1609, and was not perhaps completed in its actual form much earlier, it betrays, in some passages, the immature taste manifest in the productions, which belong to the first stage of Shakespear's dramatic career. We seem to have a recast of the older piece with some of the original leaven retained, and the matter most unusually inserted between inverted commas may be part of the 1599 otherwise lost text.

The title-page, where it is called the *Famous Historie*, and the Preface, were probably the work of Thomas Thorpe, who was a man behind the scenes in several similar ventures, most notably in the case of Shakespear's *Sonnets* issued in the same year.

Act i., Sc. 1. "Tro. Call here my varlet."

Varlet = valet, which originally signified a personage of the highest rank, as under the Greek dynasty the heir to the throne was known as the Valet of Constantinople. See my *Venetian Republic*, 1900, i. 371.

———"I have (as when the sun doth light a storm)
Buried this sigh in wrinkle of a smile—"

The modern editors print *light a storm*, which is evidently nonsense. The figure in the second line should have guarded them against such a deviation from the original copies, as the aspect of the sun slightly veiled in cloud or mist is apt to be not dissimilar from that of the features puckered into a smile. But in fact a superior reading would be *assault*, i.e. across or athwart—a word easily misheard or misread *a'scorn*.

———"O, that her hand—"

I should omit *her*, unless we are to conclude some exceptional emphasis to be desired, and, as Knight suggested, the meaning to be, *O, that hand of hers*.

Act i., Sc. 2. *An idls head.*

Why *idle*? The comparison is with an *addle* egg. The word should surely be *addle*. This play is full of such catches and quips.

Act iii., Sc. 3. *One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.*

This line is given to Ulysses, and does not seem to carry, where it occurs, our modern acceptation, nor is it easy to decide what the poet really meant from the context, the next line proceeding to reflect on the fickleness of general taste. Even taking the familiar sentence in our present way of interpreting it, it does not exactly bear the signification attached to it, but rather that a natural touch everywhere draws man and man together.

PERICLES.

The accounts of Apollonius of Tyre in the *Gesta Romanorum* and in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* were followed by a French compilation

translated into English by Robert Copland, and printed in 1510. The subject continued to attract attention in England, and in or before 1576 Lawrence Twyne wrote what he called a gathering into English under the title of the *Patterne of painefull Adventures*, a composition of consummate excellence, which passed through three editions, the last being in 1607. In that year an unknown dramatist, supposed by Mr. Fleay to have been George Wilkins, then very busy with his pen on various themes for the stage, produced a play called *Pericles Prince of Tyre* at the Globe Theatre, in which Alleyn took a part, doubtless that of the hero. Certain it is, that matter was then, or very shortly afterward, introduced by a second pen, said to be Shakespear's with some show of probability, and that Wilkins was enabled by personal attendance at the theatre or otherwise to obtain for his own use a MS. copy of the amended piece, upon which and Twyne's book he founded a novel entitled the *Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, 1608. The play itself did not see the light in type till 1609, although it had been licensed, May 20, 1608, and then offered a text beyond measure corrupt.

The drama has no connection with the Athenian Pericles beyond the name; but I suggest that Shakespear had North's Plutarch at his elbow, while he was engaged in putting some finishing touches to the Wilkins play, and was struck by the name, the sole resemblance being in the common love of music, and the poet not being aware, that the Pericles of history was a different man.

Randolph, who died in 1635, alludes to *Pericles* in his Cambridge "Oratio Prevaricatoria," 1632:—

"Insignis Pericles non audet tam celebres res."

And in his "Hey for Honesty" the same writer speaks of the hero of the play once more:—

"*Pentia*. Nay if this were so, the very tailors, though they damned you all to hell under their shopboards, would scorn to come to the making up of as good a man as Pericles, Prince of Tyre."

The gifted and witty satirist was born within Shakespear's time—before Milton, and it is a pity that he failed to lend his testimony to the authorship of the drama, which he almost certainly saw on the stage. As it is, we seem to have no earlier witness than Dryden, who, where he says: "Shakespear's own muse his Pericles first bore," seems to suggest an early composition—a criticism, which cannot be accepted.

CYMBELINE.

Dramatis Personæ. The character of Imogen, so far as the name goes, had been contemplated by the dramatist, when he was engaged in composing *Much Ado about Nothing* years before. There she was intended to be the wife of Leonato, and in the old copies is made in the stage-directions to enter twice. But the poet withdrew the part, and reserved the name, misprinted *Innogen* in the quarto, and introduced her under altered circumstances in the present play.

MACBETH.

See Buchanan, *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, 1582, fol. 73-4.

A play with this title was apparently performed within the knowledge of William Kempe the actor, and is referred to in his *Nine Days Wonder*, 1600, as something which he had not seen, and of the title of which he was dubious. He describes it as "the miserable stolen story of MacJowl, or Macdobeth, or Macsomewhat," by a penny poet. Wake in his *Rex Platonicus*, 1607, notices a piece, apparently in Latin and of short extent, which he terms *luniuncula*, exhibited before James I. in 1605 at St. John's College, Oxford, concurrently with another and more elaborate performance by Matthew Gwinne, where in a sort of Epilogue he alludes to Banquo. This was too early for George Wilkins, of whom something has been said *supra*, and who, like Marlowe, left, it almost seems, at his death certain dramatic works behind him in an incomplete state, *Macbeth* and *Timon* inclusive, and consequently the play, which Kempe mentions, must have been an interior one on the subject not hitherto identified. Wilkins accomplished all his work for the theatre, so far as one can see, in 1607-8. As regards the *luniuncula* above-mentioned, comp. Notes on *Twelfth Night*, *supra*.

The claim of the 1577 edition of Holinshed to be that used by the dramatist may be thought to derive some support from its rough woodcut of the meeting of Macbeth and Banquo with the three witches on the heath. The book, when Shakespear had occasion to resort to it, had been before the public many years, the first edition appearing in 1577, the second in 1586, so that the balance of probability in favour of his employment of one or the other is fairly equal. The engravings in the prior issue were apt to strike him, if he fell in with a copy of what must have been then a common book, poor and trite as they are. But I can well imagine him glancing at intervals at half-a-dozen copies of the *Chronicle*, edition immaterial, none of them his own.

There has been a good deal of speculation how far Middleton in his *Witch*, of which there is no contemporary edition, is entitled to the credit of having preceded Shakespear's *Macbeth*. But Middleton made very free with the character of Falstaff in his *Mad World, my Masters*, 1608, and marred what he stole. There is very slight doubt, indeed, that his *Witch* was suggested by the Shakespear play: it had been long since performed, according to the MS., by his Majesty's Servants at the theatre in the Blackfriars.

The *Merry Wives*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest* became the receptacles for the result of the poet's reading and observation in the attractive field of fairy mythology: and so in *Macbeth* he found full and happy scope for his studies of witch-lore, which then yet more powerfully appealed to the popular fancy. Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* had appeared in 1584, and whatever may be said of it, its popularity cannot have been great, owing perhaps to its bulk and price, for it was not reprinted till 1654. But Shakespear may very well have had his attention directed to it; and it was a topic in so

many mouths, that material and information sufficient to qualify an author—especially such an one—for his task were never lacking; and, besides, the commentators enumerate other literary productions within his reach, while he composed the play, where in the *Dramatis Personæ* the witches occupy a place and rank equal to those of the fairies in the other pieces named.

The tragical interest is not less strong here than in *Hamlet* and *Othello*, yet how different! The philosophical vein is rather less pronounced; the low comedy is almost absent; and the necromantic element does not indemnify us for the loss of Ariel and Puck, since there is little which rises above the ordinary accounts in books, thrown into metre and dialogue.

The arguable presence of Shakespear at Oxford in 1605, when theatrical performances were prepared in honour of James I. and his court, suggests his elaboration of the subject of the *Inanienda*, which with the *Vertumnus* of Matthew Gwinne was exhibited at Oxford on that occasion. Both these pieces were probably in Latin, and combined to send his majesty to sleep. The Scottish plot of the *Macbeth* naturally recommended itself to the poet, whether he actually witnessed the performance or not, as a favourable opportunity for pleasing the new dynasty, as at an earlier date he had in a sense dedicated the *Merry Wives* to the last of the Tudors. The Latin interlude served no farther than as a hint for a study; it hardly supplied a nucleus or outline; and the tragedy is essentially Shakespear's own conception and execution, with all its beauties, all its strength, all its incongruities. There are passages here in which Shakespear almost surpasses himself; and it is a moot point, whether we should not accord to the Ghost of Banquo precedence over that of Hamlet's father. It is undoubtedly a more conspicuous and laboured feature in the production, and may be held to exhaust Shakespear's fancy in this direction. The poet, since the completion of *Hamlet*, had had opportunities of collecting all that could be said on the matter, if we place the composition of *Macbeth* somewhere about 1608.

The sentiments and mental reach of *Macbeth* are utterly beyond probability—far more so than those of the Prince of Denmark. We have only to figure to ourselves what sort of person a Scottish sovereign of an almost prehistoric era is likely to have been, how little removed from a savage chief, to be convinced, that here once more Shakespear has used the license of a playwright to make his personality transparent through one of his characters; and where the result is in a literary and poetical respect so excellent, we have to reconcile ourselves to the sacrifice of some of the unities. Still less does the artistic presentment of the play on the stage seem proper to the circumstances. It may be sumptuous and impressive; but it is empirical.

I do not quite know whether it may be deemed an odd assignment of parts, where the rôle of *First Witch* was about 1738 played by Joe Miller. It was a function, for which he was at least as well qualified as for the paternity of the *Jests*, and the impropriety was certainly not greater than that in Johnson's *Highwaymen*, 1734, where Falstaff is represented on Gad's Hill in Georgian attire.

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In the Address to the Reader before his *Learners' Works*, 1694, Thomas Sturges has the candour and good sense to say: "For the *Magical Part*, I had no hopes of equalling Shakespeare in fancy, who created his *Witchcraft* for the most part out of his own imagination, in which faculty no man ever excelled him; and therefore I resolved to take mine from authority. And to that end, there is that one action in the play, say scarce a word concerning it, but it is borrow'd from some ancient or modern *Witchmonger* which you will find in the notes."

Where *Lady Macbeth* refers to "the cat in the adage," it might be noticed that it is a popular error to suppose, that domestic cats object to wet their feet, even when there is no urgent need. They may be constantly seen walking deliberately on the soaked ground, and some descriptions of the feline family are excellent swimmers.

Act i., Sc. 1. "2 *Watch*. . . . When the hurly-burly's done."—

Shakespeare perhaps remembered the passage in the *First Part of Henry VI*, i., 3: ". . . enter in the hurly-burly the Mayor of London and Officers."

Act i., Sc. 1. "Hover through the fog and filthy air"—

The poet, brought up in a rural district, spent the busiest years of his literary life in a city, not so thronged with houses and defiled by such foul odours as the London of a later day, yet already offering a contrast to the country surroundings, which he knew as a younger man, and without sufficient reflection, or due acquaintance with the locality, transferred the atmosphere of Blackfriars (in winter perhaps) to a Scottish moor. London proper in his day was infinitely more circumscribed than the city we know, and all the obnoxious odours and corrupt atmosphere were concentrated within a correspondingly narrow zone.

Act i., Sc. 3. "1 *Witch*. . . . I'll do, I'll do, I'll do."

This emphasis, and artifice of composition, resembles that of the ring in the *Merchant of Venice*, v., 1:—

"If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.—"

This structure appears to have caught the fancy of George Wilkins, who in his *Miseries of Inforced Marriage*, 1607, and (if it be his, which seems likely) *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, 1608, has carried the mode to something like a parody or caricature. Of course he only saw it in the *Merchant of Venice*, so far as Shakespeare was concerned.

Act i., Sc. 3. "*Ban*. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, . . ."

Notice the similarity of touch or treatment to *Hamlet*.

Sc. 5. "*Lady Macbeth*. . . yet do I fear thy nature,
It is too full of the milk of human kindness."

Not only does this description of Macbeth fail to correspond with what has been previously said of him as a warrior, but his wife is made to give vent to her passionate feelings too immoderately and too abruptly, as it is her first entrance on the scene. Such dark and bloody purposes require more leisurely and gradual evolution.

Sc. 7. "*Macb*. If it were done, when 't is done. . . ."

All this is good and very good; it is a farther instance of iteration; but the language and philosophy are those, not of the speaker, but of the dramatist throwing himself back hundreds of years, and giving Macbeth the benefit of his own more advanced period and, far beyond that, of his own matchless invention—such as never entered into the head of any one of his nation before or since. The interlocution between the Thane and his wife strikes us from the outset as a continuation of something, which has gone before; the speakers have laid the foundations of their plot *in camera*. We see, when we arrive at the third scene of Act iii., how well Lady Macbeth has dissembled, or how unobservant Macduff has been of her character.

Act ii, Sc. 1. "*Macb*. . . . With Tarquin's ravishing sides . . ."

The passage is doubtless corrupt; and the true reading is not immediately evident; perhaps for *sides*, for which the justification is not strong, we might try *shade*, i.e. ghost. The motion is stealthy and rapid. I wish to call attention to the remembrance by the poet of his own *Lucrece*, published so long before. He refers to the story in the *Taming of a Shrew*, ii. 2.

In the dialogue between the Thane and Lady Macbeth we seem to be required to discriminate between the brave soldier, who faces danger and death in the battlefield, and yet shrinks from the commission of the act, to which he is urged by his callous and domineering consort.

Sc. 3. "*Enter a Porter* . . ."

This is a characteristic diversion and artifice to break the monotony of the tragical action.

Act iii., Sc. 1. "*Macb*. . . . my genius is rebuk'd, as 'tis said,
Mark Antony's was by Cæsar . . ."

Two points seem to be worthy of consideration here: the absurd attribution to Macbeth of a knowledge of Roman history and the apparent allusion to Mark Antony as a character already treated, as if *Antony and Cleopatra* had been completed, or as if the subject were at least before the poet, when he penned the present lines and those in Act v., Sc. 7. Moreover, in this stage of the play, we perceive the mastery and moral deterioration, which Lady Macbeth has wrought over her husband, who, having scrupled to murder Duncan, has not only been over-persuaded, but has hardened his nature to the commission of a second murder without the need of instigation. The scene between Macbeth and the proposed assassins of Banquo is far more natural than some of those preceding it; and in the following

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scene, where Lady Macbeth reappears, her lord assuredly ceases to yield her any ground of displeasure or fear on the score of irresolution.

In this Act the interposition of Hecate is abnormal and mysterious, and in Act iv., Sc. 1, Macbeth is represented as enjoying the privilege of conversational intercourse with her and the three witches previously introduced as addressing Macbeth and Banquo, but as vanishing when addressed by them in turn.

Act iv., Sc. 1. Enter the three witches.

I have not found any source for the process of incantation elsewhere than in the *Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont*, transl. by Warde, 1562, a very popular book, where animal ingredients are somewhat similarly recommended for employment. But before Warde's time we find such a personage as Diana of Poitiers mixing, or causing to be mixed, for Henry II.'s children a powder, in which two of the ingredients were the fat of a *licornis* (a fish so called) and the hair of a dead man.

Act v., Sc. 7.

"*Mach.* . . . But swords I smile at,
Weapons laugh to scorn,
Brandish'd by man that's of a woman born."

This is the latest moral evolution of the Thane, and it proves a fatal and retributive one. He is infatuated by his supposed invulnerability, and is slain by Macduff.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

I have elsewhere noted that this drama was separately registered, May 20, 1606, though no such edition is known. The poet apparently had the subject before him, while he was engaged in the composition of *Macbeth*.

The play, fine and generally inoffensive as it is, though unusually lengthy, contains phrases and even passages, which might shock the prudery of a modern audience, should it be put on the stage in its unexpurgated state. But then so much of the poet's work is silently bowdlerized.

In reference to the passage, where Cleopatra speaks of being laid naked on Nilus' mud, we find in *Henry VIII.* an allusion to the *mud of Egypt*, as if the same uncommon sentiment or notion was present to the writer. It is a peculiar expression, and the parallel may serve just a little toward the authorship of the later drama.

Act v., Sc. 2. "Hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus here?"

Cleopatra refers to the asp, "that kills and pains not."

In Churchyard's verses before Gascoigne's *Poesies*, 1575, he says:—

"The kinde and loving worme that woulde his ladie please."

I am informed that in Germany a mother will call her child "a little worm," and Cleopatra elsewhere explicitly speaks of herself as addressed by Antony as "a serpent of old Nile" by way of endearment, *worm* and *serpent* being formerly *synonymous*.

The allusion already quoted to "the little O the Earth" presented itself to the dramatist, perhaps, as a reminiscence of "the wooden O" applied to the circular Globe playhouse in the Prologue to *Henry V.*

A WINTER'S TALE.

This play was also originally known as *A Winter Night's Tale*—a sequel to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.¹ Richard Niccols owed to it the suggestion of his *Winter Night's Vision*, and the editors of the 1623 folio decided on a title not likely to clash with the latter, yet clearly less expressive and appropriate.

In Marlowe's *Rich Jew of Malta*, written before 1593, Barabas says:—

"Now I remember those old women's words,
Who in my wealth would tell me winter's tales."

This may perhaps be considered as the penultimate drama produced by Shakespear. It was acted before James I., Nov. 5, 1612 (Fleay, *Chr. Hist.*, 1886, p. 249); but it seems doubtful, whether the author attended the performance.

In the song beginning, "When daffodils begin to peer," the structure of the earlier stanzas suggests the influence of some of the lyrics in *England's Helicon*, 1600.

Dramatis Personæ. Autolycus.

This character is apparently indebted to Newbery's *Dives Pragmaticus*, 1563, reprinted from the only known copy in my *Fugitive Tracts*, 1875.

Act i., Sc. 2. "Leon. . . . Or else be impudently negative—"
Should we not read impotently?

Act iv., Sc. 3. "Shep. . . . Who loves another best."
Read the other.

"Mop. . . . I love a ballad in print. . . ."

The ballads here recited are skits on those which actually appeared, and of which some are extant.

Act v., Sc. 3. *Giulio Romano.*

I have referred to this personage and passage *suprà*.

As regards the apparent geographical solecism in placing Bohemia on the sea-coast, there was long a prevailing ignorance on these points among early writers other than scholars. The indifference to accuracy did not affect theatrical success, and it is by no means chargeable to Shakespear alone. Jonson, in his *Masques*, almost overwhelms us by his show of erudition; but then they were for the Court. There is a vague mention of the *Land of Baulm* in the ballad-romance of *Iloncall and Lullian*.

¹ Steevens, on the back of a letter addressed to him by Garrick about 1770, cites a *Winter Night's Posttime*, and assigns to it the totally improbable date 1594 as that of the original completion or performance. It may be perhaps rightly ascribed to 1610.

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Shakespear even treats it as a *port*. The use of geographical terms and almost prehistoric names had its precedents, but it had its inconvenient and disconcerting side, at least from the point of view of educated persons. The dramatist, however, kept before his eyes popular audiences, the majority of which cared nothing for errors and contradictions, or even for niceties of theatrical costume, of which they were not qualified to form a judgment. Nor would such an audience to-day. How many at a modern London play-house could tell you where Bohemia is, what sort of person the actual Faust, what the period of Hamlet? Shakespear saw that these passed unobserved in the widely read novel, and may have concluded that they were good enough for the drama. The character and dialogue were a different matter. He glances at the insular ignorance of his countrymen and contemporaries, in the passage where he delivers the injunction: "Prythee, think there's livers out of Britain." It is one, forsooth, which has barely ceased to be applicable.

It is almost necessary to point out that in the poet's account of the flowers distributed to the sheepshearers by Perdita he has included some, which are peculiar to the spring.

TEMPEST.

Dramatis Personæ. Prospero in sense Faustus, and the character follows at a distance that of the German magician, whose story was published in English before 1592, and was at once dramatized by Marlowe; but there has arisen a curious question, whether the dramatist did not immediately borrow the name from that of a contemporary riding-master in London. As a Christian name it was familiar in Italy, however, and the dramatist might have met with it in Commines. The supernatural attributes given to Duke Prospero have a curious side-light shed upon them by the mention in Froissart of the Duchess of Orleans, daughter to Bernabò Visconti, Duke of Milan, and her expulsion from Paris by reason of her suspected magical practices on Charles VI. The Italian of the Middle Ages and Renaissance was usually held to be peculiarly adept in the employment of necromantic arts. Shakespear's use of demonology—not witchcraft—limited itself to casual allusions. The delightful creation of Miranda—the maiden who had never beheld a man, except her father, is an inversion of the mediæval fable "*de filio regis qui nunquam viderat mulierem*." Very probably Mr. Fleay is correct in supposing that this and the *Winter's Tale* were Shakespear's latest dramatic efforts. He points out that the Masque in Act iv., Sc. 1 was probably written by F. Beaumont for a Court performance in 1612 or 1613—more probably, if at all, the later year.

For the extreme date 1612-13 there is some support in the windy weather of that winter, commemorated by two or three contemporary tracts. 1613 was known as the Windy Year and 1614 as the Cold Year; but of stormy periods and consequent shipwrecks there were precedents within the earlier year 1611. The more forward date would suit, so far as the poet's continued residence in London goes.

Ariel. I offer some remarks on this conception *supra*.

The disputed reading in the song: "where the bee sucks, there { suck } I"—would be terminated by me by a judgment for *lurk*; for Ariel, as a spirit, needs no physical sustenance, and indeed I should, if I dared, go farther, and object to the word *but* in the fourth line, as it is out of symmetry with a cowslip's bell, and even a moth could bear such a burden as Ariel is here represented, although elsewhere in the play he offers himself to our view as a mighty instrument of the will of another. But the whole conception of Ariel is sadly vulnerable.

Caliban. This character is not an attractive one, and in some of the language, which is put into his mouth, the revolting coarseness jars with the ideal simplicity and purity of Miranda. One can scarcely avoid regretting that a passage or two was not omitted. The drama is quite long enough to have borne some curtailment. One would be exceedingly pleased to surrender the lines more particularly in question as doubtful; but the turn of thought, grave and audacious as it is, is too Shakespearean, too introspective.

Act i., Sc. 2. In the song, "Full fathom five thy father lies," the modern thinker must not too nicely scrutinize the suggested formation of coral from human bones, and must content himself with the poetical subtlety of the notion.

Act iii., Sc. 1. "*Mir.* I am a fool,
To weep at what I am glad of."

This corresponds to the jest of the fool, who laughed, when it rained, and wept, when the sun shone, because, said he, after rain comes sunshine, and after sunshine rain.

Act v., Sc. 1. "*Ste. . . Coragio.*"

There seems no reason, why this word should be misspelled.

—— "*Prosp.* I'll break my staff—"

The speaker (and writer) had in view the staff of office, which on its expiration was broken by the holder, as in the ancient stewardship of the royal household in England.

—— "My true preserver, and a loyal sir
To him thou follow'st . . ."

For *sir* read *servant*. Perhaps in the MS. the word occurred in an abbreviated form. But other words in the present passage seem wrong or at least debatable.

On the nautical phraseology in this play I have already dwelled in the text.

HENRY VIII.

This play, which was possibly prompted by the previous compositions on the reign by W. S. in 1602, and by Samuel Rowley in 1605, was probably never completed by Shakespear, and remained in

MS. in an imperfect state, till 1613, when it was presented at the Globe theatre, and formed the occasion of the loss of that house by fire. It was, then, according to Sir Henry Wotton, a new play, that is, it had not been shown before, and the circumstance, which drew attention to its existence, was perhaps the appearance of Samuel Rowley's piece on the same reign, of which we have a printed edition in 1605. It seems to be generally admitted, that *Henry VIII.* received finishing touches from an editor under some unknown circumstances; some passages toward the end are very inferior; it was not brought on the stage again; nor was any text of it made available till 1623. The prologue and epilogue were by an independent pen.

The "discharge of chambers," mentioned in the play, is held to have been the cause of the catastrophe. We learn from a contemporary copy of verses, that Richard Burbage took a part in it, probably the leading one, and that Henry Condell and "Stuttering" Hemings were there—doubtless sustaining the other characters. Samuel Rowley's performance on the same reign, which embraced the accession of Edward VI., had been some time on the stage at another house. Not only was that reprinted in 1603, but also the Cromwell play of 1602. One stimulated the call for the other.

Some kind of abridged adaptation of *Henry VIII.* seems from a notice in a jest-book called *Fragmenta Aulica*, printed in 1662, to have been in existence at that date, or before, and to have been performed at a school. The tradition as to the vocal impersonation of the king was then fairly fresh and accurate:—

"A Company of little Boyes were by their Schoolmaster not many yeares since appointed to Act the play of *King Henry the eighth*, and one who had the presence (or the absence rather) as being of a whining voice, puling spirit, consumptive body, was appointed to personate *King Henry* himselfe, only because he had the richest cloaths, and his Parents the best people of the parish, but when he had spoke his speech rather like a Mouse than a Man, one of his fellow Actors told him; If you speak not *HOH* with a better spirit and voyce, your Parliament will not grant you a Farthing."

This passage shews that the *Hoh!* key was then regarded as proper and essential to the part; but in the play as printed in 1623 the king's ejaculation is *Ha!* In the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, as printed in 1602, Falstaff is made to ask:

"Doe I speake like Horne the hunter, ha?"

—a curious parallel, which may have been due to the writer of *Henry VIII.* recollecting in the earlier drama a passage there inserted as a parody of the king's traditional utterance. But it occurs in our early drama as a common interrogative exclamation.

Act v., Sc. 1. "*K. Henry.* Avoid the gallery . . ."

In my edition of *Shakespear's Library* under the play I give the parallel passage from Fox's *Martyrs*, which seems more dramatic than the scene from the play itself. Avoid clear.

TWO NOBLE KINSMEN.

It is really to be hoped that this weak and crude play, full of patent and obvious incongruities, will not continue to find a place in the works of Shakespear, of whose genius it is wholly unworthy. It is said that the title of the 4^o of 1634 to be presented by the King's Servants at the Blackfriars theatre, almost as if it was then only in course of presentation, which may be tantamount to saying that it was found among Fletcher's papers after his death in 1625, and was not immediately put upon the stage; and there is scarcely a possibility that the MS. ever fell even under the observation of the greater poet. It is surprizing, that so much ingenuity should have been wasted in trying to decide, what parts or passages are to be ascribed to Shakespear. All that can be affirmed is, that here and there we are able to note an expression, which reminds us of the Stratford man. Assuredly there is no complete act or even scene from a second hand. The occasional grossness is itself un-Shakespearean. The textual discriminations of Editors strike me as of no value whatever.

The reintroduction of the legend of Theseus, which had been rendered familiar by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, may shew a study of the latter or a common resort to Plutarch, whose knowledge of the mythological hero was as imperfect as that of the Englishman, or indeed both, as the author of the *Noble Kinsmen* takes Theseus from a different seeing point, while he makes equal havoc of probability and consistency.

It appears to be superfluous to make Shakespear responsible for more than he actually deserves in the direction of shortcomings. The wonder is, that we have not the *Birth of Merlin*, first printed in 1662, included in the editions. It is not much worse than the *Noble Kinsmen*.

As regards the date of the play in its printed shape there is not much to guide us. The concluding stanza of the crazy song by the Gowler's Daughter in Act iii., Sc. 5, suggests a loan (or *vice versa*) from the nursery rhyme of the *Three Jovial Welshmen* (Halliwell, No. 290).

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

Venus and Adonis. The Marchioness of Newcastle, in the Second Part of *Love's Adventures*, Sc. 29, has the following passage, which also seems to point to Drayton's *Idea* :—

"Lady Amorous. Faith he appears like *Adonas*.

Lady Wagtail. Did you ever see *Adonas*?

Lady Amorous. No, but I have heard the Poets describe him.

Lady Wagtail. *Venus* and *Adonas* are only two poetical *Ideas*, or two *Ideas* in poetical brains.

Lady Amorous. Why, *Ideas* hath no names.

Lady Wagtail. O yes, for Poets christens their *Ideas* with names, as orderly as Christian Fathers doth their children"—

The preceding passage is in a way curious, as it illustrates the ignorance or negligence of a woman of rank and letters, who could

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scribble with much facility any amount of twaddle and ribaldry, and had the shallowest store of learning and taste. If her ladyship pronounced *Adonis* as she spelled it, the effect must have been odd.

Something has been said (see pp. 307-8, 362) of the Elizabethan method of announcing forthcoming plays from the stage. At the conclusion of his *Glasce of Gouvernement*, 1576, Gascoigne has this passage allusive to a demonstration by the audience of approval or otherwise, when the performance was at an end:—

"*Fidus*. I thanke you, Sir. My Masters, the common saying is, clap your handes; but the circumstance of this wofull tragicall comedie considered, I may say iustly vnto you wring your handes: neuerthelesse I leaue it to your discretion."



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